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KING HENRY THE EIGHTH AS A MODEL OF KINGSHIP

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled KING HENRY THE EIGHTH AS A MODEL OF KINGSHIP, submitted by Patricia Steepce Barry in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines King Henry the Eighth, a play attributed to Shakespeare, to discover what sort of coherence it may have had for audiences in its day. The discussion begins with a brief review of the difficulties the play poses, including the problem of authorship. It then considers literary and dramatic precedents, the theatre business, and the social, political and cultural backgrounds of the play in order to show what playgoers may have expected of a king play in 1613. Some observations by professional dramatists of their audiences follow, including observations of a king at a king play. Three hypothetical audiences defined for King Henry the Eighth in 1613 are the groundlings at the Globe, the King at the Court, and the elite at Blackfriars. The entertainment that the play provides for each of these audiences is described. By focusing primarily on the king-figure and on the relationship of other characters to him, we can see how the play could have appealed to three kinds of spectators. The final chapter considers the implications of a king play which attempts to please a diversified audience. The picture of a king that King Henry the Eighth presents suggests that the craft of the successful playwright may sometimes have been similar to that of a successful sovereign.

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the plays attributed to Shakespeare, King Henry the Eighth has caused the most embarrassment. Though it appears to be a late production of the great dramatist, it seems to accommodate itself poorly to the spirit of his other chronicle dramas. Also, it exhibits disturbing peculiarities of structure, language and characterization which prevent it from conforming nicely to our conceptions of Shakespearean drama. It is tempting either to ignore the play or to dismiss it off-handedly. My purpose here is to try to discover what sort of coherence the play might have had for audiences in its day, and I have focused on the central character, the king, as the most promising clue to the playwright's intent.

When The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth first appeared in print it was the concluding item in a sequence of ten history plays in the First Folio edition of William Shakespeare's works, published in 1623 under the aegis of John Heminge and Henry Condell, Shakespeare's fellow members of the Globe Theatre company, or the King's company.

There is no certain evidence as to when it was written. Because the word "truth" dominates the sense of the Prologue, and because Sir Henry Wotton provided sufficient details of a play being enacted when the Globe burned down in mid-performance June 29, 1613, scholars have felt justified in identifying the Henry VIII play of the First Folio with the "new" play of the King's Men that Wotton referred to as All Is True.

According to Wotton's account, All Is True represented "some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII," with the stage business requiring the firing of chambers as King Henry entered while "making a masque at Cardinal Wolsey's house." When the guns were discharged, Wotton recounts, the thatched roof was accidentally set alight, and the theatre burned to the ground. Wotton's description of the play tallies with the First Folio play's Act I, Scene iv.¹

Although it is thought that Shakespeare was in retirement in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1613,² many authorities take it for granted that he wrote the First Folio play and All Is True, and that the two titles refer to the same play. But others raise questions, first, as to the date of the play's composition, then as to its identity with All Is True, and finally as to its authorship.

Since 1850, when James Spedding published his views that the First Folio King Henry the Eighth was partly the work of John Fletcher, a younger member of the King's company to which Shakespeare belonged, serious discussion of the play has been marred by diversionary argument.

Samuel Johnson was likely the first to doubt that Shakespeare was the sole author when he suggested that perhaps Ben Jonson may have added the Prologue and Epilogue. ". . . the genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Katharine," Dr. Johnson said of the play.³ This dictum, coupled with Alexander Pope's earlier corrections of text "mutilations" that he blamed on ignorant actors, laid the foundations for what one critic describes as the "growth of guesses of the eighteenth century from their modest and likely beginnings into the strange doctrines that Bacon wrote Shakespeare. . . ."⁴

But it was Alfred Lord Tennyson who inspired Spedding to investigate the play's versification intensively, on the hunch that some passages were composed by Fletcher. Spedding's lead enticed others into devising quasi-scientific schemes for distinguishing the styles of the two playwrights whose different hands had been seen in the play. Other motives for this activity may be inferred from the variety of interpretations and editing to which the play has long been subjected.⁵ The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are notorious for the sanctimonious attitudes toward Shakespeare that developed into a sentimental "bardolatry;" Spedding had provided a fashionable method of attributing disagreeable elements to a lesser-known playwright. A succession of analysts dissected and resorted the First Folio text of King Henry the Eighth into charts tabulating extra monosyllables, "overflows" or run-on lines, feminine endings, and so forth. Criticism was often based on some questionable findings. In accepting dual authorship in 1922, Marjorie H. Nicholson maintained that the meaning of the play is elusive because we are "biased by the distorted version;" consequently, we must read separately the portions Spedding had determined as genuinely Shakespearean, filling in the gaps with our imagination.⁶

When Peter Alexander reviewed the situation in 1930 he decided there was so far no scientific basis for distinguishing different verse styles. "As the play stands it is hard to see what better resource the dramatist could have employed to secure a satisfactory unity of impression than this variation in versification, which is made the basis of its disintegration."⁷ His position has since been supported by Hardin Craig, the editor of the Arden Shakespeare, and such diverse

critics as E.M.W. Tillyard and G. Wilson Knight.

But the argument has continued in other quarters; there is no universal agreement to this day that the play is solely the work of Shakespeare. In 1953 Ants Oras was attempting to find a workable method of analyzing metrical differences exhibited by certain passages. R.A. Law, who also accepted the Spedding hypothesis, elaborated a different set of metrical tests in 1959. As recently as 1967, Jan Kott, the "social realist," assumed while describing Shakespeare's cyclical view of history that he "probably wrote only a few scenes for Fletcher's tragedy Henry VIII," and that it "belongs to the history plays solely in a formal sense."⁸

Frank Kermode reviewed the discontent of all critics of King Henry the Eighth in 1948. While rejecting Spedding's proof as insubstantial, he nevertheless regarded Alexander's position as also vulnerable and the controversy as still unresolved. He concludes that the play itself is still a critical problem, a play with limited coherence.

Kermode's stand in the controversy will be adopted for the purposes of this paper: for the time being the authorship of the play is unsettled. The close study of the particular habits of contemporary playwrights may help end the difficulty, but it is beyond my scope here.

My intent is to see what a playwright of 1613 might have been trying to do in such a king play as this. Theatre history, politics and the cultural tone of the time may all have a bearing on the attitudes of the audiences for whom the play was written and for whom it

may have been eminently suitable -- although its "meaning" may seem perplexing to us. A knowledge of the demands made upon the dramatist should heighten our appreciation of the competence and artistry the play exhibits. Such knowledge, while it may not provide conclusive evidence as to the play's date and authorship, may point the right direction to look.

The first undertaking here is to describe the main influences on audience attitudes in 1613 in order to show some ways in which playgoers' expectations could differ and some ways in which they could be the same. In Chapter I the term "larger mise en scène" serves as a short-hand label for the pertinent literary, theatrical, social, political and cultural background against which the stage play and its king-figure should be examined. There follows a chapter on the expectations of theatre audiences in general, and of a king at a king play in particular. The First Folio play is then examined in terms of hypothetical audiences for evidence of how the various expectations are fulfilled, especially in regard to the depiction of the king. Finally, some implications of the dramatic solutions -- if they may be considered solutions -- will be discussed.

CHAPTER I

THE LARGER MISE EN SCÈNE

Sources and Precedents

A description of the milieu of King Henry the Eighth properly begins with a consideration of the sources of the play itself and some of the immediate dramatic precedents because they indicate what the play-going public was already prepared to accept.

The chief source of King Henry the Eighth, including the order of its coronation pageant, is the 1587 edition of Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, a work which also contributed vastly to the history plays more firmly accepted as Shakespeare's. Holinshed's own sources for his Henry VIII material was Edward Hall's Chronicle; the writings of Polydore Virgil, an enemy of Wolsey; and those of George Cavendish, a Wolsey adherent. Hence, the technique of hedging political positions that we shall observe in the play has precedent in Holinshed.

Some details derived directly from Hall, indicating that the playwright consulted that work directly. The earliest surviving edition of Hall's Chronicle, begun in 1510 and published in 1542, is dated 1584. Over half of it is dedicated to the achievement of national coherence under the Tudors.¹

W.G. Boswell-Stone identified two images in the play as drawn from John Speed's History of Great Britain, published in 1611, which, if the inference is sound, will help firm the play's date.² One is Wolsey's acknowledgement of having passed "the full meridian of my

glory" (III,ii, 224), a metaphor ordinary enough to have been derived from common lore; but the other, in which the Cardinal speaks of being like boys "that swim on bladders" that break (III,ii, 359), is more striking. Boswell-Stone also finds that the intrigue of the Privy Council against Cranmer came from John Foxe's Actes and Monuments of Martyrs, published in 1563 and again in 1583; and he uses the later edition for his purposes.³

A number of contemporary productions were exploiting similar situations to those found in King Henry the Eighth. Among them was Ara Fortunae, a mock coronation in Latin which was part of the dramatic festival, The Christmas Prince, staged at St. John's College, Oxford, in 1607; Ira Fortunae, a mock dethronement, was its sequel the next year.⁴ Wit at Several Weapons, variously assigned to John Fletcher, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, and dated as early as 1609,⁵ employs a shepherd's mask as a device for the capture of a young girl from her father and suitor. The situation is highly suggestive of that in Act IV, Scene iv of King Henry the Eighth. Still another was Thomas Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, containing a christening scene, as does King Henry the Eighth; it was produced between 1611 and 1613 by the Lady Elizabeth players.⁶

All these themes, motifs and situations, then, the ordinary Jacobean theatre audience was accustomed to seeing on the stage by June, 1613. To them should be added themes found in history plays attributed to Shakespeare as well as in Marlowe's Tamburlaine and

Edward II, and other historical productions, all of which shaped popular English conceptions of history, the monarchy, statecraft and the nation.

In Queen Elizabeth's last years there was a growing interest in plays whose themes impinged on the reign of her father -- or at least in varying treatment of those themes. Thomas Lord Cromwell (by "W.S."), among the Shakespeare apocrypha, was produced by the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1600; the earliest known edition in 1602.⁷ Henslowe notes in his Diary that at least two "Cardinal Wolsey plays" were written for his own group in 1601; Henry Chettle was paid for one such in June and July; and Chettle, Drayton, Mundy, and Smith were paid for another on the same topic in August and December.⁸

One of the most popular of plays in the early seventeenth century was Samuel Rowley's When you see me, You know me, also called Henry VIII, produced by Prince Henry's men (formerly Admiral's, a Henslowe company) in 1604 when the Fortune Theatre had reopened after being shut down for more than a year on account of the plague and Queen Elizabeth's death. Rowley's play, entered at the Stationers' Register Feb. 12, 1604-05, under the description of "the enterlude of King Henry the 8th," was published by Nathaniel Butter in 1605. Butter republished the play in 1613, this time with a woodcut depicting King Henry in the Hans Holbein pose substituted for the ornamental mask on the cover. The composition date for Rowley's play is also uncertain

but there is no record of its stage production before 1603.⁹

The Rowley publication dates show that after Elizabeth's death there was profit in printing a play with Henry VIII as a main character. Furthermore, the Queen herself figured importantly in Thomas Heywood's If you know not me, You know no bodie. The second part of this play, sub-titled . . . With the building of the Royall Exchange: And the famous Victory of Queene Elizabeth, was produced by Queen Anne's players in 1605, and it was published the following year.¹⁰ So, if the King's Men had not already satisfied public taste by some sort of production focused on Elizabeth, her father, or both of them, they were well-advised by 1613 to improve upon Rowley's play, at least, which Butter was even then reprinting.

The title page of the 1605 edition of Rowley's play reads:

When you see me, You know me. Or the famous Chronicle Historie of king Henry the eight, with the birth and vertuous life of Edward Prince of Wales. As it was playd by the high and mightie Prince of Wales his seruants. By Samvell Rowly, seruant to the Prince.¹¹

The ceremonial language is appropriate since Henslowe's company, for which it was written, enjoyed the Prince's favour at that time. Indirect compliment is apparent in the text. For instance, when Queen Jane (Seymour) begins labour, King Henry directs her to "Ad a ninth Henrie to the English Crowne" (277), although of course she produces an Edward. There are also engaging scenes between the young Prince and his tutors, and he is instrumental in mending a quarrel between the King and the Queen.

But the gallant young Prince Henry died in 1612; the acting

company named for him became Palsgrave's company. An altogether new approach to the popular Henry VIII-Elizabeth theme was in order for the London stage, although for some reason Rowley's Prince of Wales version -- with Henry VIII on the cover -- was selling in 1613. The King's Men, enjoying the particular favour of King James himself, would require an especially delicate treatment. The perfect production would avoid unseemly glances at the institution of monarchy James so jealously cherished, and at the same time it would tone down the blatantly anti-Catholic partisanship of Rowley's play.

Some elements of When you see me . . . had been well-tested with audiences, and details the two plays share indicate that the author of King Henry the Eighth probably had Rowley's play in mind as he wrote. The "phoenix" image is a common feature, Rowley using it in a speech by King Henry which refers to the succession to the throne (489-491), and the First Folio play employing it in Cranmer's concluding panegyric to Elizabeth with implied compliments for James I. Another parallel is King Henry's offer of a reward to whomever will bring him news of the birth of a son (Rowley, 286-287), and his paying 100 marks to the ungrateful Old Lady who informs him he has a daughter (King Henry the Eighth, V,i, 170).

But more interesting is the depiction of some characteristics traditionally associated with Henry VIII: for instance, his boisterous, strutting grandeur and his taste for adventures in disguise. It is worth examining the two plays closely to see which elements had a lasting appeal for the Jacobean audience, which passed out of vogue or beyond discretion, and which needed changing by 1613.

Comparing

Am I a cypher, is my sight growne stale,
Am I not Hary, am I not Englands king, Ha
(656-657)

in its context of blustering anger in Rowley's play with "Who am I? ha?" (II,ii, 67) of the other, it is apparent that the bluffness can sometimes be retuned. Further, the notion of Rowley's Henry "to walke the round" (931) amongst his subjects in such a way as to be mistaken by a watchman for an enemy of the peace, rather looks back to Shakespeare's Henry V (1599),¹² and seems to have a kinship with Measure for Measure, produced the same year Rowley's play was first printed. But in the First Folio's King Henry the Eighth, the King's well-known delight in "making masques" is exploited in an entirely different way. There his incognito adventures incorporate features of the masking entertainments which the historical Henry introduced into the English court and which were revived and elaborated in the reign of James I.

King Henry's hearty drinking, depicted with relish by Rowley, is a discreet part of the later play where Henry is limited by the dialogue of Act I, Scene iv, to one on-stage "health," and only the suggestion of more in the wings.

Rowley also includes the fall of a wily Wolsey, an intriguer whom his King Henry describes as "base-borne" (2977). In the First Folio play such slurs on Wolsey are reserved for the speeches of lesser figures. Long before his fall, Rowley's Wolsey is accorded rough treatment by the surly King:

Fawning beast stand backe:
 Or by my crowne, ile foote thee to the earth . . .
 (647-648)

And the braggart Henry impulsively consigns four councillors to the Tower with a bloodthirsty gusto absent in the other play:

Call in our guard, and beare them to the Tower,
 Mother of God, ile haue the traitors heads,
 Go hale them to the blocke . . .
 (652-654)

although later his "spleen is calmbd" and he has them fetched back. But in the First Folio play, King Henry's impulsive outbursts are limited to occasional expletives; his overt bullying is moderated by stage directions and dialogue to "frowns," charitable rhetoric, reasoned reproaches, and heavy irony. "You have said well," he interposes (III,ii, 149), as Wolsey gropes for excuses for his treachery, and he repeatedly sounds this sanctimonious note as he prolongs Wolsey's anguished explanations.

The Rowley version of Wolsey's fall occurs unhistorically during a meeting of King Henry and the Emperor Charles. More significantly, Rowley skirts the divorce issue by a discreet sacrifice of historical fact: Wolsey's tenure is simply extended into the period of Henry's marriages to Jane Seymour, Ann of Cleves and Catherine Parr, while Ann Boleyn is alluded to only in passing (528). Henry's reputation for dismissing his wives at whim is perpetuated in only four lines:

Commend me to the Ladie Catherine Parry,
 Giue her this Ring, tell her on sunday next
 She shall be Queene, and crownde at Westminster:
 And Anne of Cleaue shall be sent home again . . .
 (1420-1423)

Rowley's Catherine also attempts to intervene on behalf of a disgraced subject, somewhat as Queen Katharine of the First Folio play intrudes in the Buckingham case (I,ii). She also comes to grief through the machinations of the Cardinal; in both plays we are treated to scenes of a queen bewailing her fate and protesting her innocence. But Rowley's Catherine is accused of treason, the young prince intercedes, and the King and the Queen are reconciled in a scene of homely affection, whereas the First Folio play gives the King the famous "Gothy ways" speech (II,iv, 134-155) which is so often taken to be evidence of his kindly character.

Plainly, the Folio play moderates much of the King's gusto as it is found in Rowley. Besides, the 1613 play seems deliberately to soften the impression of the King's relations with the queen, perhaps to gain the tone of Rowley's reconciliation scene, although the circumstances in the two plays are not comparable. Finally, the King's divorce is made a central episode in King Henry the Eighth, while Rowley has treated the matter casually and briefly. King Henry had long been associated with the idea of divorce, but apparently by 1613 there was a taste for treatment of the topic in detail.

The Inspiration of Business Considerations

The technique of incorporating mask and pageantry into a stage play such as King Henry the Eighth also is in keeping with theatrical developments of the years preceding the 1613 production of All Is True. From about 1600 when the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars are recorded as producing secular entertainments, the commercial theatres --

"common stages" as Ben Jonson called them -- were pressed to imitate the private extravaganzas staged by the companies of child actors for the court-allied elite.¹³ Charles W. Wallace even deduces from the dearth of manuscripts of the Blackfriars boys that most of their earlier productions were almost solely "ephemeral" entertainments: masks and the like, compositions of dancing color, movement, and music. He believes that before the boys' emergence on the theatrical scene the mask as an integral part of the play was unknown.¹⁴ But Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy contains the enactment of Hieronimo's tragedy of Soliman and Perside, staged during a wedding festival. Kyd's play, dated about 1592, is thought to be a production of Strange's company,¹⁵ which surely was not a children's company. And for a long time, "dumb shews," such as those between the acts of Sackville and Norton's Gorboduc (1561) had assisted the interpretation of the play's action proper. Interestingly, the dramatis personae for King Henry the Eighth refers to "Several Lords and Ladies in the Dumb Shows,"¹⁶ indicating that the pageantry for this drama was still thought of in old-fashioned terms.

As dramatists for the Blackfriars boys, Ben Jonson, John Marston and George Chapman inevitably integrated mask and drama in such productions as Cynthia's Revels, The Dutch Courtezan and The Widowes Tears. The same technique was employed on the public stages by Shakespeare in Love's Labour's Lost, Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet, and by Henry Chettle and Anthony Mundy in The Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon, all produced in the last years of Elizabeth's reign.¹⁷

Upon the accession of James, court patronage of theatrical

entertainments increased to the point of extravagance, compared to the relatively thrifty regime of Elizabeth. While "Elizabeth loved magnificence, she loved economy more."¹⁸ But James was different. Chambers excuses his extravagance on several grounds, including "the necessity of keeping up supplementary establishments for a queen consort and an heir apparent" and "the personal inclination of Anne of Denmark for ostentatious prodigality." James promptly appointed the two leading commercial companies, Admiral's and Chamberlain's to the service of the court -- as Prince's and King's, respectively. Their performances were increasingly in demand, until by the season of 1612-13 the King's company, for example, were required to present as many as thirty-two plays for the royal family.¹⁹

Because of Queen Anne's taste for performing in theatrical spectacles, Jonson and other leading poets were hired by the Court to write masks, and these tended to take on the characteristics of literary drama, furthering the evolution of an integrated form. With poets, playwrights and acting companies working simultaneously for court and commercial audiences during these prosperous seasons, techniques and innovations were inevitably adapted from one purpose to another.

The height of English indulgence in mask extravaganzas was reached in February, 1613, when the marriage of Frederick Elector of the Palatinate to Princess Elizabeth was celebrated with entertainments including public and court masks, watershows and a sham battle on the Thames. It was an interval which helped seduce the commoners' taste for imitations of lavish court entertainments. Among the court servants called upon to contribute their talents to the displays of

patriotic exuberance were Thomas Campion, Inigo Jones, George Chapman, Francis Beaumont and Sir Francis Bacon.²⁰

Meanwhile, King James's suppression of the children's company at Blackfriars in 1608 had injected new complexities into the theatrical situation. The King's Men took over this private intimate theatre as an extension of their commercial enterprises.²¹ Bentley sees this event as changing the direction of English drama:

In 1608, for the first time in the history of the English theatre, a regular adult London company decided to try to attract the exclusive audience of the private theatre that had always been the clientele of boy companies.²²

Consequently, the playwrights and actors were required to develop a new style of theatrical entertainment entirely different from the popular drama the company presented at the open-air Globe and in command performances at court. Evidence of the new style appears in Shakespeare's later plays, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest, which Bentley reasons were written especially for the sophisticated and courtly audience the King's company saw as a profitable clientele.²³

At Blackfriars, Bentley assures us, it "would be easier to emphasize points in the quiet candlelit surroundings, and 'sentiment [would] become as telling as passion.'"²⁴ Women attended, and the audience was comparatively well-mannered. In the First Folio play, King Henry remarks, apropos the divorce trial, that

The most convenient place that I can think of
For such receipt of learning is Black-Friars
(II,ii, 138-139)

The words seem to be more than just an allusion to the sophisticated Blackfriars audiences, calculated to rouse laughter from either Blackfriars or Globe playgoers. It suggests that the Blackfriars atmosphere

was particularly suited to staging such an impressive spectacle and subtle drama as a state divorce.

After examining some 150 plays, about half of which were Blackfriars productions, Jacob Isaacs concludes that the chief difference between public and private theatres lay in the "fineness of the indoor performances," while the public theatres, exhibiting a broader style, were often accused by contemporary playwrights of "bawdry, crudity, slanging matches, rough and tumble, and 'tear-cat thunderclaps' of ranting and roaring."²⁵ Among the special effects typical of Blackfriars productions, Isaacs lists "grouping," as in tableaux; spectacular ceremonials -- the staging of a "magnificence" -- including weddings, funerals and martial entries; scenes in which successive knots of people pass over the stage "by degrees;" and the most complex uses of upper, lower and inner stages, recesses and trapdoors in combination with atmospheric music and elaborate properties. We recognize in King Henry the Eighth all the marks of a Blackfriars production.

In such wise, considerations of business within the theatre world may be regarded as among the sources of dramatic inspiration, so that the "new style" is at least partly a product of changed physical facilities, the acquisition of a new set of stage practices, a reorganization of personnel, and accommodations of acting technique and repertory to the taste of a knowledgeable and specialized audience.

A second consequence of the King's company's 1608 venture at Blackfriars, Bentley tells us, is that its success stimulated other companies of players to imitate the innovation. As competing private

theatres were established a "schism" appeared in the audience. The Globe, the Fortune and the Red Bull still operated in the summer, but soon they began to draw "different" crowds than they had of old:

The London theatre has become a dual institution: one a theatre for the court, gentry and the literate, another theatre for the vulgar masses. At Blackfriars and the Phoenix and the Salisbury Court, people like the Mildmays and Lady Newport, the Duke of Lennox and Lord Digby, Sir John Suckling and Bulstrode Whitelocke watched the plays of Fletcher and Shirley and Davenant and Massinger; at the Red Bull and the Globe and the Fortune were the artisans and tradesmen, apprentices and sailors who (in the later years) made up the London mob that became such a problem as the country drew closer to civil war.²⁶

Heretofore the "composite audience," the one for whom Shakespeare wrote most of his plays, included "every rank and class of society." According to H.S. Bennett,

It was no uncommon thing for the upper classes to visit the theatre even if they took pains to sit apart in 'the Lords room,' or in other places of comparative seclusion each gallery housed a various crowd: 'a Gentleman or an honest Citizen . . . with his Squirrell by his side cracking nuttes;' or 'a Puny seated Cheeke by Iowle with a Punke;' scholars, lawyers' clerks, earnest young students

As well as such folk the audience included a miscellaneous body of people who stood on the ground round about the stage in the pit or yard . . . in short, 'the penny stinkards!'²⁷

We shall return to Bentley's "schism" further on to consider its effect on audience expectations and its consequences for the dramatist. For now, it is enough to keep in mind that the extent to which the split had developed by the time of the Globe's production of All Is True in 1613 may be relevant in establishing its identity with King Henry the Eighth as well as the "meaning" of that play. Certainly, any "schism," if the dramatist had to reckon with it, would make a difference in how the same dramatic situations and motifs would be

understood by the various elements of the audiences in different theatres.

Politics and a Piece of Gossip

Besides the class distinctions Bentley discerns in the Jacobean theatre world, other social divisions are pertinent here. These developed from political and religious issues emerging during the reign of King James I.

James assumed the throne in 1603 in an atmosphere of hopeful expectation that the problems emerging at the end of Elizabeth's reign could be settled by compromise, if not eliminated. The agonizing question of succession evaporated: James had already produced heirs. As for religious issues, Catholics, judging by his policy in Scotland, expected toleration; the Puritans looked for concessions or "purifications" in Church of England ritual; the Anglicans anticipated a unifying policy and a strengthening of their economic position. The House of Commons, having grown stronger and more aggressive, was ready, as Willson explains, to press for an extension of power.²⁸

At first James showed intentions of satisfying all. But his strategy of straddling was conducted without the tactical finesse and cunning that characterized most of Elizabeth's maneuvers. Nor was he endowed with the Tudors' personal magic: his dogmatic insistence on the King's divine right was virtually an article of personal faith, whereas Elizabeth had usually managed to maintain the illusion without losing sight of reality.

James's insistence on rigid conformity, if only in outward

demonstration of loyalty, was viewed by the Puritans as hypocritical and wicked. For the time being mild and opposed to fanaticism, they soon hardened their bitterness into hatred for the Catholics, throwing their support behind Parliament in its struggles with the King. The Catholics, as they watched James's contradictory efforts to negotiate compromises and alliances with papal powers and experienced his leniency at home, were lured into conspiracy under cover of the outward conformity he demanded.

As for the Anglican Church, James's narrow-mindedness and ill-advised appointments drove deeper wedges among its internal groups: ". . . the Church was headed not towards greater comprehension but towards a hard and narrow exclusiveness."²⁹ Eventually, the King disillusioned even his most loyal bishops by asking the Church for finances which he could not extract from Parliament.

With Parliament he was always at loggerheads, partly because reforms demanded by the representatives of the increasingly powerful squirearchy trespassed upon what the King considered the royal prerogative. Naturally, then, the Commons balked at granting him the funds he badly needed to finance the unseemly extravagances of himself and his court. By 1610 he was reduced to requesting a loan from the City of London, and thus he became indebted to the corporation which Elizabeth had repeatedly outmaneuvered in struggles over Crown real estate.³⁰

Finally, James's peace-making efforts satisfied nobody. His aim was to be on good terms with Catholic and Protestant powers simultaneously, but it was beyond his capacity to ease the conflicts that

culminated in the Thirty Years War. His settlement of peace with Spain in 1604 displeased the English "war party" whose interest in those inflationary times stood to gain by a final crushing of Spanish imperial power. The war was thenceforth continued as a "private war." At the same time, James permitted undercover support of the Dutch in their war against Spain as a diversionary tactic to trim their expansive competition with English merchants.

Willson, James's biographer, blames the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 on James's failure to avoid the appearance of duplicity in his policy towards Catholics in England.³¹ But the obvious advantages of inflaming opinion and polarizing the domestic factions by a violent assault on Parliament and the King suggest that the inspiration for the plot may have derived ultimately from a wish to undermine the King's ambivalent foreign policy.

Be that as it may, Parliament subsequently passed severer laws against Catholics, and the lines of hostility were drawn with increasing clarity and rigidity. By 1612, the court itself was whipsawed by an anti-Spanish Protestant faction in sympathy with the "parliamentary mutineers," and a pro-Spanish Catholic faction opposed to Parliamentary encroachment of power; each was struggling for influence over a vain, paranoiac and self-indulgent King -- or the ear of his favorite.

Intruding into this state of affairs was the scandal of Lady Frances Howard's divorce from the young Earl of Essex.³² The Howards were among the pro-Spanish, Catholic faction in the councils of King James. The King himself had helped arrange the marriage of Lady

Frances and Essex in 1606 in keeping with the royal penchant for promoting alliances among rival English nobility; their wedding was celebrated with entertainments at court, staged at royal expense.

Unfortunately, during Essex's absence from England, Lady Frances became enamored of James' current favorite, Robert Carr (later Viscount Rochester and finally Earl of Somerset). When Essex returned to England, the intrigue continued. At last, with the support of the Howards who counted on gaining the adherence of Carr to their faction, Lady Frances sued for divorce, claiming that her husband was impotent.

For Carr, King James had already demonstrated an effeminate affection that made him ridiculous. Now the King intervened on behalf of Carr's interest to the extent that he appointed a commission in May, 1613, to try the divorce case. Subsequently, he brought personal pressure on the appointees to decide in favour of a divorce. When the desired verdict still seemed in doubt, James packed the commission with two more amenable bishops who on September 25 helped bring forth a favorable decision.

"For months the divorce remained a topic of general conversation, casting in the minds of decent people the greatest odium upon the King and his bishops," writes Willson.³³ It is not hard to imagine that the divorce case was the subject of gossip for quite a few months before the trial, as well as after, and that such gossip was most likely the chief diversion of the summer of 1613. After all, the intrigue began before 1609, developing as it progressed such spicy details as would take little time to spread from intimate court circles to the general populace.

Also, Sir Thomas Overbury, a member of the anti-Spanish faction and a former friend of Carr, had suddenly fallen out with the King and was a prisoner in the Tower during the divorce proceedings. It is hard to believe his predicament was unknown to his own supporters, among them Protestants and sympathizers with Parliament. Overbury's misfortune heightened the public's interest in the Howard divorce case to which it was related.

As word of the scandal spread, opinion on sex and morals tended to line up with opinion on politics, regardless of historic ironies. Willson observes that James's part in the affair was "duly observed and remembered," and that his unethical meddling was lowering him more than he knew in his subject's estimation.³⁴ It might be added that, if his behavior was dividing his subjects from their monarch, it was also assisting in the division of his subjects from each other.

At any rate, in 1613 any treatment of the subject of divorce, whether in a play or a pamphlet, would have excited the interest of a public hungry for scandalous news about the intrigue at Court and the King's role in it. And as we shall now see, the enlightened Elizabethan mind still tended to explain the ways of the world by means of allegory and historical parallel. The figure of Henry VIII, traditionally associated with divorce and Court scandal, should it appear on a playbill or a pamphlet cover, might well have signalled that the topic to be treated was the one Londoners found most absorbing of all that summer.

Dogmas, Myths and Change

In regard to habits of thought, the pre-Jamesian theatre audience was relatively homogeneous, despite the diversities already described. Granted, there were broad differences in circumstances and in education, but the "cultured minority," the semi-literate middle, and the illiterate masses shared portions of the same view of mankind: the Medieval universal world order that incorporated society and the individual in a cosmic scheme.

Whether a playgoer was a "penny stinkard," a lord in a secluded box, or one of the glorious Tudors, he tended to agree with the playwright in accepting the dogma of natural law. The scheme was a fixed one, awaiting only the Day of the Last Judgement to be altered catastrophically. Everybody understood the system -- more or less; and nobody could do anything about it because it was divinely ordained and essential for social order.

E.M.W. Tillyard has described this system as it survived into Elizabethan England before its dissolution by Renaissance concepts of humanism, scepticism and cynicism made way for the Puritan revolution. He finds evidence in Elizabethan literature that England long remained a refugia for the medieval view even after the Renaissance 'enlightenment' had swept continental Europe with ideas that allowed for the political, economic and religious reorganization of the West and the eventual emergence of new dogmas based on empirical science.

In the Medieval universe all elements were related and parallel in orders and degrees, and man was seen as "summing up the universe in

himself."³⁵ Such a mode of thinking gave allegory its formidable power to describe several planes of reality simultaneously and even to demonstrate their inter-relationships by means of analogy. Hence, the "levels" of interpretation of traditional literature. The human body stood for the body politic; an audience stood for all audiences; any brute for all brutes and brutishness; any monarch, for all monarchs. The disruption or misproportion of any part of the pattern would produce a corresponding disruption of the whole.

Further, what we may see in Elizabethan literature as an obsession with antithesis may have been an extended application of the Medieval doctrine of man's dual nature, his ambivalence as an angel and a beast. This view, coupled with a craving to fit all phenomena into a knowable, manageable system, gave occasion for certain recurring motifs in literature: order and disorder, nobility and servility, freedom and bondage, illusion and disillusion -- one "half" always mirroring the other and incomplete without it. Each pair could be considered as a two-faceted entity rather than as a dichotomy in the proper sense. As we will see later on, this style of thinking may have given King Henry the Eighth a special meaning for some of its audience.

The habit of thinking in allegorical parallels and of seeing life in terms of antitheses and mirrorings had long contributed to a profound interest in the patterns of rises and falls affecting the eminent and ambitious, in the style, say, of Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1587-88).³⁶ The wheel of Fortune was a fixture of the Medieval mentality, subject though it was supposed to be to Divine

Justice; and so it persisted in Elizabethan thinking. The principal literary work through which the concept of rise-and-fall was disseminated in the Fifteenth Century to the literate English, and eventually to the vulgar masses, was The Fall of Princes, John Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio's De Casibus Virorum Illustrium, also a source for the tragedies in Chaucer's "The Monkes Tale." In the Sixteenth Century, Lydgate's work became the core of A Myrroure for Magistrates, which was finally published in full by 1578.³⁷ In this version William Baldwin, George Ferrers and others extended the original historic "tragedies" to include falls of notable figures of English history. For their purpose they relied heavily on Hall's Chronicles, and in so doing

...they applied to history the Tudor teachings of a theocracy. They saw in the rise and fall of nations and in the life and death of men the providence of God . . . They did not fail to recognize that in this life the just are sometimes made to suffer, they did not fail to recognize that evil harms others than its author, but they did bring a new conception to tragedy in making their tragedies reveal how inevitable were the ends of irreligious actions. In other words, they foreshadowed the ideal of the tragic hero as he has become familiar to us in the plays of Shakespeare.³⁸

So popular was this work that it went through seven editions during Elizabeth's reign; new material was added in 1574 by John Higgins and in 1578 by Thomas Blener-Hasset.

Ultimately . . . the Mirror incorporated not only the stories selected from the period of history embodied by Shakespeare in his great series of historical plays, but also the stories incorporated in King Lear, Lochrine, Cymbeline,--in more than thirty Elizabethan plays . . . [which] I think . . . underestimates the number. It gave to many of those stories which in the epics of Daniel and Drayton and Warner and Spenser are today known to all lovers of Elizabethan literature, their first modern literary form. It likewise inaugurated the popularity of a great series of tragedies in narrative verse. But its primary importance lies in the

fact that it popularized as literature the stories of English and British history, and that succeeding uses of the same materials bore inevitably the mark of the first selection and interpretation.³⁹

The tragic rise-and-fall concept, as a shared view of otherwise diversely circumstanced people coincided with a passion for the wisdom of Seneca. Senecan sayings permeated the moral teaching of the times, from the grammar schools to the stage, and thus filtered into the thinking habits of the population at large. Playwrights like Kyd and Marlowe transformed the style and fatalism of Seneca into a distinctively Elizabethan Renaissance drama of tragic self-consciousness while catering to a general taste for violent dramas of blood-revenge and heroic suffering.

Nor was the Senecan influence limited to plot and style alone. As Eliot demonstrates, it also made itself felt through language, in the works of Shakespeare, Daniel, Marlowe, and Heywood, among others:

...Seneca's influence upon dramatic form, upon versification and language, upon sensibility, and upon thought must in the end be all estimated together. . . . How the influence of Seneca is related, in the Elizabethan mind, with other influences, perhaps those of Montaigne and Machiavelli, I do not know But the frequency with which a quotation from Seneca, or a thought or figure ultimately derived from Seneca, is employed in Elizabethan plays whenever a moral reflection is required, is too remarkable to be ignored; and when an Elizabethan hero or villain dies, he usually dies in the odour of Seneca.⁴⁰

The common ingredient of this "wisdom" wherever expressed was an almost terrifying fatalism, a stoical endurance of the inevitable sufferings and wrongs of mankind that went far beyond the boundaries of Christian dogma in its depiction of blind pride as a source of tragedy. Extremes of anguished courage were needed to purge the

Elizabethan emotions. The pervasiveness of this tragic attitude, reinforced by the language of the popular stage, could not but colour the understanding of the audience long after the Senecan tragedy itself began to give way to the vogue for tragi-comic romance.

The persistence of the Senecan influence becomes clearer if we consider the ramifications of the 1608 Blackfriars theatre venture. Public theatre audiences were much more faithful to "old favorites" than the Blackfriars coterie which characteristically preferred the new and novel.⁴¹ It is likely, then, that the old-time tragedies, of which the Globe naturally had a full repertory, were frequently revived, the public theatres thus thriftily catering to a "dated" popular taste, and so contributing to the prolonged acceptance of the concepts those dramas purveyed. Yet the appearance in King Henry the Eighth of the rhetorical poetry and ritualistic plot of the old-fashioned rise-and-fall tragedy gives the play a familiar meaning for almost the entire range of the 1613 audience, although it is true that those elements appealed largely to the commoners attending public theatres like the Globe.

In still another respect, that is, in its insularity and its common experience of awakening national consciousness, the Elizabethan audience was peculiarly coherent. Since Henry VIII's reign, Englishmen had been exposed to the so-called "Tudor myth," written into their history by Hall, the same chronicler whose interpretations of English history informed the Myrroure for Magistrates and forthwith a host of poets, scribblers, and several generations of English people.

As Hall's sub-title indicates, King Henry VIII himself is implicitly the hero of this myth in which the anarchy and terror of the Wars of the Roses were ended by his father's fortuitous victory at Bosworth Field:

The union of the two noble and illustre families of Lancaster and York, being long in continual dissension for the crown of this noble realm, with all the acts done in both the times of the princes, both of the one lineage and of the other, beginning at the time of King Henry the Fourth, the first author of this division, and successively proceeding to the reign of the high and prudent prince King Henry the Eighth, the indubitable flower and very heir of the said lineages.⁴²

Tillyard describes Hall's Chronicle as the first English "moralizing history," and he maintains that Hall's theme shaped important aspects of Shakespeare's chronicle plays. For some reason, he leaves King Henry the Eighth out of consideration.⁴³ But whether we consider King Henry the Eighth as Shakespeare's tenth episode in the national epic drama or as the work of other writers for whom the Shakespeare and Marlowe chronicle plays were precedents, Hall's approach to English history illuminates one side of the play's significance. Hall's (and Holinshed's) matter has been dramatized for the population by Shakespeare in plays that resound with the thundering consequences of intrigue, ambition and alien evil. In King Henry the Eighth these same threats are defeated or brought to a stand-still by the triumph of a lusty hero-king. For those to whom the Tudor myth was historic truth, the play describes the English nation arriving at its season of success, extended by the christening scene to the reign of Elizabeth. In the context of the Tudor myth, therefore, the play is a comic resolution of a national struggle for unity. The culmination

of a historic sequence of tragic rises and falls, it ends in glorious victory, asserting English nationalism over alien threats and domestic turmoil.

It remained for King James to adjust the national myth to his own purposes. And so he did, swallowing the humiliations he had suffered at the hands of Elizabeth. As "the state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth," and he himself was an instrument of God, the King took pains to explain to his subjects (in the sceptical House of Commons) that his divine authority was also hereditary, and that as the descendent of Henry VII he himself perpetuated the union of the houses of York and Lancaster. Henry VIII was demoted, and Henry VII resurrected into prominence in his place. The first Tudor was seen by James as

a symbol of union between England and Scotland, for Henry had arranged the Scottish marriage upon which Stuart claims to England rested. Henry had believed himself a descendent of King Arthur, proclaimed by legend the ruler of all Britain; he had given the name of Arthur to his son. James also, before 1603, had called himself a new Arthur about to unite the kingdoms.⁴⁴

James himself now became the flower of the union of the Red and White Roses. As such he is admitted to the grand company of triumphant Tudor monarchs in King Henry the Eighth by means of an allusion near the very end of the play. Nevertheless, this allusion fudges the issue of his hereditary authority by leaving him dangling as a successor to the vile Henry and Elizabeth. From this point of view the play is a qualified comedy.

Inevitably, James's alterations of the Tudor myth coincided in some respects with the views of other Englishmen who thought of Henry

as an arrogant devious bully, an anti-Christ who impoverished his people and destroyed the true Church by confiscating its property, dispossessing the faithful and usurping the Pope's authority. Among these citizens were recusant Catholics. For them, Henry VIII's divorce from Katherine of Aragon was the disaster that split England from the Papacy, and his marriage to that "spleeny Lutheran," Anne Boleyn, symbolized economic ruin and political eclipse for the faithful during the triumph of evil and heresy. So, while much of the population had been exposed to the Tudor myth, as James well understood, there was by 1613 a demonstrable difference of opinion on interpretation of its details by some of the English. For them, King Henry the Eighth pictures the tragedy of evil triumphant.

From a broader perspective, the Jacobean versions of the Tudor myth can be counted simply as local, minor shifts among larger changes in thinking that were already seeping into the English consciousness. These new notions were aspects of the Renaissance that had already swept Europe; so far the "seepage" had penetrated only the upper layers of English society and their circles of cultured dependents, while the lower layers were simply buffeted about by the effects. Enlightened cynicism, the bitterness between Catholics and Protestants, the blossoming of Puritan morality, the contagion of a trader mentality, and the hunger of Parliament for power could be considered but oblique reactions to ways of thinking unleashed in Europe more than a century before by Italy's rediscovery and reworking of classical knowledge and Roman concepts of power. As the English received this Renaissance culture, they applied it to their own way of life in their

own English way.

So while the technique behind the application of the "Tudor myth" had been considerably inspired by Renaissance ideas of statecraft filtering out of Europe, the myth itself was propagated as a mystique uniquely appropriate for the English masses. If Elizabeth can be numbered among the Machiavellian political realists of the age, she was a wholly English specimen of the breed. If her state was a work of art, in the Burckhardtian sense, the materials, the design, and the expression were strictly English.

Yet, it was precisely the artistry of the task of ruling, and the necessity for artistry, that James failed to grasp. Despite his rigorous and extensive education, his intellect was too puny to distinguish between individual excellence as a discipline and the same quality as the hoped-for product of dogmatic assertion. What was most valuable of the Renaissance impulse inevitably eluded this morbid provincial, and his rule slipped further into decadence and dissension in ways that were obvious to all Englishmen capable of comparative judgements.

Yet, perhaps it did not matter if James was feeble and foolish. Perhaps his failures allowed him a longer reign than he might otherwise have enjoyed. Perhaps events were too far advanced for any monarch in James's position to head off disaster. The reception in England of word of Galileo's stunning discovery of Jupiter's planets in 1610 suggests that this was the case. Isaacs makes plain that at least a fraction of the intelligentsia of London -- including Sir Philip Sidney and the poets of his circle -- were acquainted with the

Copernican theory by the 1580s; Galileo's news was final confirmation of what they already knew. One of the first copies of Galileo's exposition of his discovery, Siderius Nuncius (The Messenger of the Stars) was sent to King James by his ambassador to Venice, Sir Henry Wotton, a friend of John Donne.

Wotton had not only summarized Galileo's startling findings, but shrewdly put his finger on a point to which Donne returns time and time again. "Galileo," [Wotton] said, "has first overthrown all former astronomy, and next all astrology."⁴⁵

The astrology "mattered" most, as Isaacs explains, because it was the framework of the traditional system of social order under which the Tudors had constructed their illusion of a national state. The annihilation of that framework rendered the monarchical society vulnerable in the extreme. John Donne needed no lengthy initiation into the arcane mysteries of the new science in order to visualize the revolutionary repercussions of Galileo's discovery. In The Anatomy of the World, printed in 1611, he saw the death of a young girl of the nobility as representative of the world's incipient disorder, and he provided the sophisticated court coterie with an extended meaning for the familiar image of the phoenix:

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
 The Element of fire is quite put out;
 The Sun is lost, and th' earth, and no mans wit
 Can well direct him where to looke for it.
 And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
 When in the Planets, and the Firmament
 They seeke so many new; then see that this
 Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies.
 'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
 All iust supply, and all Relation:
 Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
 For every man alone thinkes he hath got
 To be a Phoenix, and that then can bee
 None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.⁴⁶

From 1611 on, at least for the informed few, the phoenix image would call forth multiple responses: dismay, perhaps, and nostalgia, fear and scepticism would reverberate with an ironic dissonance in the hearts of some men. For others the phoenix would stand for great new opportunities to be seized. Appearing in a king play like King Henry the Eighth the fabled bird could introduce the suggestion of tragedy to come or signal the dawn of regenerative success. How you took it would depend on who you were and what you knew.

CHAPTER II

THE AUDIENCE AT A KING PLAY

Many Stomachs

Almost any audience, no matter how select, no matter how ignorant, exhibits variations in temper beyond its pragmatic concerns, political affinities and habits of thought induced by dogma and myth. Unlike a mob of discontents which can be roused to mayhem by a calculated appeal to certain emotions, playgoers usually are at the theatre for the purpose of being entertained by having a variety of their emotions touched in ways that are pleasing. They may laugh or weep together, although they do not always do so for precisely the same reasons. Although theatre audiences may riot when their deepest sentiments seem persistently outraged by the performance, they are satisfied when the emotional content is shuffled with other ingredients of entertainment in what might be called dramatic intervals.

Bennett provides some useful insights into the psychology of the old-time Elizabethan audience:

At moments, doubtless, it was stirred almost as one man by some passionate or dramatic situation. At other moments, however, its response was much more patchy and limited; a soliloquy absorbed some, mildly interested but perplexed others, and frankly bored another section of the audience, just as a bout of horse-play or of bawdy put part of the house in a roar, but may have left others grieving, since such behaviour was liable to disturb the balance of the play and to mar the effect which the dramatist had hoped to obtain.¹

Managers of theatre companies, playwrights and actors designed their productions on the basis of their familiarity with the

variegated sentiments of a wide-spectrum audience:

The practised dramatist knew how to ring the changes so that no section of the audience was left long unprovided for, and a lively sense of pleasures to come ward off that spectre of the dramatist -- boredom. It may be that one part of a play appealed to one section of the audience and another to another section. It is also true that one and the same part of a play appealed to all sections at different levels.²

T.S. Eliot considers that such an understanding of his audience was fundamental in Shakespeare:

In a play of Shakespeare you get several levels of significance. For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the characters and conflict of characters, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more musically sensitive the rhythm, and for auditors of greater sensitiveness and understanding a meaning which reveals itself gradually. At none of these levels is the auditor bothered by the presence of that which he does not understand, or by the presence of that in which he is not interested.³

Eliot was even more concise when he said "If the audience gets its strip-tease it will swallow the poetry."⁴

Victor Hugo, who had much in common with the writers of Elizabethan historical plays, recognized this principle but put it in different words in his Préface to Ruy Blas (1838), a royal domestic tragedy shaped by the collapse of an empire. While the composition and conventions of Hugo's audience were considerably different from those of the Elizabethans, Hugo's comments are worth consideration at length because he is one of the few professional dramatists who took the trouble to enlarge upon this aspect of his craft in unambiguous prose:

Three species of spectators [Hugo writes] compose what is conveniently called the public: firstly, the women; secondly, the thinkers; thirdly the crowd itself. What the crowd demands almost exclusively in a drama is action; what the women all would have is passion; what is sought most specially by the thinkers is character.

If the three classes of spectators are studied closely, here is what is noted: the crowd is enamored of action to such a degree that they will go so far as to cheapen characters and passions. While action interests them also, the women are so absorbed by passionate developments that they are preoccupied little by the design of characters; as for the thinkers, they have such a taste for seeing characters, that is living men on the stage, that while freely welcoming the passion in a drama to be a natural event, they themselves could almost come to be importuned by action.

The crowd demands of the theatre sensation above all, the women, emotions; the thinkers, meditation. All would be satisfied, but, the latter are pleased through the eyes; the former are pleased through the heart, the last through the spirit or soul. Thence, on our stage, three kinds of work are quite distinct: the one vulgar and inferior, the other two renowned and superior, but all three satisfying a need: for the crowd, melodrama; for the women, tragedy which analyzes passion; for the thinkers, comedy that portrays humanity.⁵

Hugo admits that generalities of this sort must leave room for exceptions, and that in actuality the three types of spectator are mixed:

. . . we know very well that the crowd is a great thing in which one finds all -- the instinct for good with the taste for the mediocre, love for ideals with common appetite; we know equally that every complete thinker ought to be feminine in the delicate aspects of the heart; and we aren't ignorant that . . . there is very often a thinker in a woman.

[Nevertheless] to all men who take seriously the three sorts of spectators mentioned, it is evident that all three are right. The women are right in wanting to be moved; the thinkers are right in wanting to be taught; the crowd is not wrong in wanting to be amused. From this evidence is deduced the law of drama.⁶

He demonstrates the application of these principles in his own Ruy Blas, explaining what each of his three typical spectators will see in the drama. Like Eliot, he concludes that each type tends to see or hear only what interests him, an observation that has its corollary in Colley Cibber's statement on the effect of an actor's

gestures:

At such a time the attentive Auditor supplies from his own Heart whatever the Poet's Language may fall short of in Expression, and melts himself into every Pang of Humanity which the like Misfortunes in real Life could have inspir'd.⁷

As long as it is remembered that the stark Senecan temper of the Elizabethan interest in passion and terror eventually gave over to a taste for the domestic setting, bald political satire and dripping sentimentality, Hugo's and Cibber's observations are instructive. At least they help us read a Prologue like Thomas Middleton's for No wit, no help like a Woman's as evidence of the early seventeenth century playwright's consciousness of the different effects of the ingredients of his play upon his vari-tempered audience:

How is't possible to suffice
 So many ears, so many eyes?
 Some in wit, some in shows
 Take delight, and some in clothes;
 Some for mirth they chiefly come,
 Some for passion -- for both some;
 Some for lascivious meetings, that's their arrant;
 Some to detract, and ignorance their warrant.
 How is't possible to please
 Opinion toss'd in such wild seas?
 Yet I doubt not, if attention
 Seize you above, and apprehension
 You below, to take things quickly
 We shall both make you sad and tickle ye.⁸

Or, as Shakespeare expressed it in one line, even earlier: "We'll not offend one stomach with our play" (Henry V, Prologue, II, 40).

As for dealing with the sentiments of a Jacobean audience at a king play, we can do no better than to examine the First Folio's King Henry the Eighth. There, beneath the layers of ironic ambiguity which clothe the Prologue we discern an analysis of the multitude similar to Middleton's, akin to Cibber's and Hugo's, and

consistent with Eliot's observations:

I come no more to make you laugh: things now,
 That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
 Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe,
 Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
 We now present. Those that can pity, here
 May, if they think it well, let fall a tear;
 The subject will deserve it. Such as give
 Their money out of hope they may believe,
 May here find truth too. Those that come to see
 Only a show or two, and so agree 10
 The play may pass, if they be still and willing,
 I'll undertake may see away their shilling
 Richly in two short hours. Only they
 That come to hear a merry bawdy play,
 A noise of targets, or to see a fellow
 In a long motley coat guarded with yellow,
 Will be deceived; for, gentle hearers, know
 To rank our chosen truth with such a show
 As fool and fight is, beside forfeiting 20
 Our own brains, and the opinion that we bring
 To make that only true we now intend,
 Will leave us never an understanding friend.
 Therefore, for goodness' sake, and as you are known
 The first and happiest hearers of the town,
 Be sad, as we would make ye: think ye see
 The very persons of our noble story
 As they were living; think you see them great,
 And follow'd with the general throng and sweat
 Of thousand friends; then in a moment, see
 How soon this mightiness meets misery: 30
 And, if you can be merry then, I'll say
 A man may weep upon his wedding-day.

(Prologue, 1-32)

Depending upon who you are, the Prologue is a joke: there is indeed a "noise of targets" in the play, and one of sufficiently inflammable possibilities that it is thought to have burned down the Globe. There are also episodes that might be considered "fool and fight." And who is to say the Prologue himself did not appear in a long striped yellow coat?

On the other hand, the Prologue explicitly looks forward to somebody's tragedy. But whose tragedy it is to be and what sort of

tragedy depends upon your "stomach." The ambiguous syntax in which Line 21 is imbedded suggests there may be more than one "truth" to be seen in the play, just as the Prologue as a whole indicates that the audience is subject to more than one kind of sentiment about all this king play is to contain.⁹

The Epilogue bears out the ironic intent of the Prologue. The play will never have pleased the sleepers, who have been "frighted with . . . trumpets" intended to gratify others who want action and excitement. As well, the gossips, craving to hear the city "abused," have been slyly tricked by having their expectations frayed out inconclusively whenever promising parallels are touched. While there is something for nearly everybody, the pleasure in the play is derived ultimately from the emotions -- the sentiments of pity, terror, national pride, nostalgia, joy, and contempt, which the drama plays upon in different ways for different kinds of people. "The merciful construction of good women" who are not so reluctant to demonstrate their delight in such feelings will set the example for those who happen to be more reserved.

The King as Audience

It may be that King James never saw King Henry the Eighth under any title. Although he spent more money than any previous monarch for court pageantry and drama, there is little evidence that the King was personally enthusiastic about drama. His favorite pastime was hunting.

Chambers believes James had "some personal taste" for the

drama, but he quotes a contemporary witness to the effect that the King took no particular pleasure in holiday plays, and that the enthusiasm for theatricals and theatre people came from the Queen and the Prince. The King was subjected to considerable ridicule by the theatres, but he probably tolerated some abuse because to have suppressed the satires and caricatures the Queen enjoyed would have called attention to his strained relations with her.¹⁰ Only specific audacities were punished until after 1608 when there seems to have been a "standing order" against stage representation of any "modern Christian King." Still, as Chambers observes, the "even more dangerous resources of allegory and of historical parallel" remained open to the playwright catering to the taste for topical allusion.¹¹ To these resources might be added others: the skill of the actor in nicely tuning his lines and gestures with a maximum of innuendo, and the providence of the playwright in arranging opportunities for such touches.

Regardless of James's taste, his personal attendance or the subtleties of circumventing propriety, the King was always implicitly a member of the audience -- either by proxy of his court coterie, men like Sir Henry Wotton, or by the imminent possibility of a command performance in his own presence. This circumstance should be considered if we are to think of a king play either as a production of the King's company or as the work of Shakespeare, a sharer in that company. It is noteworthy that the King's company tended to avoid the obvious indiscretions risked by other players; the King's playwrights and managers were necessarily alert to their patron's own

sentiments about the topics to be dramatized.

It is not difficult to estimate the feelings of a king such as James at a king play. In the first place, out of sheer personal interest he would identify with the king -- as any king would do. Colley Cibber's observations of King William at a performance of King Henry the Eighth about a century later demonstrate this identification, although the production William saw was no doubt based on an "improved" script. "A Play presented at Court, or acted on a Publick Stage, seem to their different Auditors a different Entertainment," Cibber's somewhat effusive account begins:

. . . as we were not here itinerant Adventurers, and had properly but one Royal Auditor to please; after that Honour was attain'd to, the rest of our Ambition had little to look after: And that the King was often pleas'd, we were not only assur'd by those who had the Honour to be near him; but could see it, from the frequent Satisfaction in his Looks at particular Scenes and Passages: One Instance of which I am tempted to relate, because it was at a Speech that might more naturally affect a Sovereign Prince than any private Spectator. In Shakespear's Harry the Eighth, that King commands the Cardinal to write/ circular Letters of Indemnity into every County where the Payment of certain heavy Taxes had been disputed: Upon which the Cardinal whispers the following Directions to his Secretary Cromwell

The Sollicitude of this Spiritual Minister, in filching from his Master the Grace and Merit of a good Action, and dressing up himself in it, while himself had been Author of the Evil complain'd of, was so easy a Stroke of his Temporal Conscience, that it seem'd to raise the King into something more than a Smile whenever that Play came before him: And I had a more distinct Occasion to observe this Effect; because my proper Stand on the Stage when I spoke the Lines required me to be near the Box where the King usually sate: In a Word, this Play is so true a Dramatick Chronicle of an old English Court, and where the Character of Harry the Eighth is so exactly drawn, even to humourous Likeness, that it may be no wonder why his Majesty's particular Taste for it should have commanded it three several times in one Winter.¹²

Cibber also quotes Sir Richard Steele's remark that the King had liked King Henry the Eighth so well "that I was afraid I should

have lost all my Actors! For I was not sure the King would not keep them to fill the Posts at Court that he saw them so fit for in the Play."¹³ Its inflated qualities aside, the statement is useful for indicating what dramatists saw as important to a monarch in the audience.

Besides identifying with the stage king on both the emotional and intellectual planes, James would have his own peculiar response to the Tudor myth as it was incorporated into the drama, seeing it as an appropriate public crutch for his own position, and perhaps as an ironic commentary on events that lingered in his private memory. In brief, the chief requirements to satisfy James would be a successful king, but one that was not very obviously better than James himself.

For the rest, the dramatist could rely on an Elizabethan tradition which accepted literature as useful political instruction for the great. That tradition permitted William Baldwin to dedicate his 1559 edition of A Myrroure for Magistrates thus:

To all the nobilitye and all other in office, God graunt wisdom and all thinges nedeful for the preseruacion of theyr Estates.¹⁴

The tradition prevailed upon the stage as well, so that Sackville and Norton's Gorboduc (1561), a tragedy in the classical vein, construes the errors of an ancient British king as lessons for Queen Elizabeth who was in the audience.¹⁵

Orchestration

Hugo maintains that the most successful dramatist is he who can satisfy each member of the audience simultaneously in tight

dialogue and action without superfluous words. He links himself with Shakespeare in accomplishing this marvel, although most critics and theatre-goers would argue that the two are vastly different in quality. Even so, the French dramatist provides us with a professional standard by which to measure the success of the First Folio play, now that some of the main sentiments and interests of the 1613 audience have been described.

Harmonious balancing of such a multitude of interests and sentiments -- including especially those of a touchy and often ridiculous King -- requires, as Bennett explains it, that "the dramatist had to play upon his audience with something of the same skill as is displayed by a composer in using his various instruments to their fullest advantage." 16

But what if we also accept Bentley's conception of the changes introduced into the London theatre by the King's Men's Blackfriars enterprise, and include the divisive influence of politics and cynicism and the revolution in social order that was only just penetrating the English consciousness? Only after weighing these elements with the massive stolidity of traditional English habits of thought can we begin to see that the "orchestration" is apt to be even more complicated than Bennett indicates.

So, as the disparate elements in the audience begin to lose their harmony -- even under the influence of an obscure change in theatre affairs or the barely noticed apprehensions of an intellectual elite -- the "all-purpose" dramatist, he who learned his craft under

different conditions, would be driven to more extreme efforts to overreach the dissonance. The least he can do is insist on a tune familiar to all, and to arrange the discordant elements as counterpoints of innuendo.

The chapter that follows attempts a theoretical reconstruction of several points of view appropriate to the 1613 milieu as a way of seeing how King Henry the Eighth and its principal character may have satisfied diverse expectations in audiences that still had some traditions in common. Such a study relies to some degree on a technique of fiction, that is, the development of imaginary versions of the same actions. These versions are based as nearly as possible on the previous account of the contemporary milieu, the "larger mise en scène" of the play. The imaginary views themselves are not assumed to be factual or "true;" they are intended only as experimental arrangements of impressions of the dramatic elements in order to arrive at some understanding of a perplexing play.

CHAPTER III

THE KING PLAY

The People's King

For a Globe Theatre audience King Henry the Eighth provides the ingredients for a triumphant hero in the spirit of Shakespeare's Prince Hal-Henry V and Rowley's Henry VIII. Static though he may seem to critics close-reading the text, the on-stage King Henry can be the center of interest and of what passes for action, especially for a crowd that takes the institution of monarchy for granted. To the loyal conforming subject, he is the source of most of the spectacle¹ and much of the comedy. For the most part his entrances are suitably embellished with the excitement of trumpet flourishes, ceremony, gunfire, and commotion among the courtiers, or else effected with the surprise of "disclosures." Undeniably good King Harry -- masculine, vigorous, swaggering -- he is absent only from Act IV, a stretch of but two scenes. In the episodic progress of the play this need not be a noticeable gap.

Broadly staged, Henry's success is dramatically visible, from his entrance in the second scene when he seems hemmed in by court rivalries and foreign intrigue, through his rowdy invasion of Cardinal Wolsey's banquet, to the last act when he appears above the council chamber to witness Cranmer's disgrace:

Ha! 'tis he, indeed:
Is this the honour they do one another?
'Tis well there's one above 'em yet.
(V,ii, 25-27)

His admirers are with him as he hides behind the curtain to eavesdrop on the squabbling councillors. His sudden appearance in the council chamber to impose order with brusque commands and imperious reproaches is timed to satisfy the crudest taste for comic plotting. Finally, indubitably in charge, he orders affairs of state transformed into a grand pageant in which he and the child Elizabeth are the center of a spectacle that manages by allusion to James to perpetuate the moral rightness of monarchical authority to the audience's own time. It is a pageant heralded by the brutish joy of a stage mob, fecund and anarchic, the "fry of fornication" (V,iv, 34-35) whose sentiments are identical with the mob in the theatre. For the groundlings Henry stands forth supremely untarnished by the vices and misfortunes that destroy his antagonists.

If we argue that, in comparison to Rowley's play, the typical Henry VIII trade-marks seem somewhat thinly spread in the text, we should remember that the Jacobean theatre-goers could supply vivid impressions from memory, and that Rowley's play was part of their mental furniture. Ordinary people knew the story so well that suggestion could be counted on to prompt busy recollection.

"Taxation!" Henry explodes in the second scene; "Wherein? and what taxation?" (I,ii, 47-48). The energy of his outburst is enough to convince the most absent-minded spectator that the King is the protector of his subjects from the injustices of their superiors. He is a sharer of their sentiments. In such a way he is identified with the interests of the crowd in the pit. By the time he has interrupted the Surveyor's tale of Buckingham's treachery with his

famous "Ha!" of indignation, King Henry is firmly authentic. Traitors, intriguers, and hand-wringing councillors do well to cringe.

As long as a character with the reputation and flamboyance of King Henry VIII is competing for attention, there is no reason why the sympathies of an English commoner of 1613 need linger to the point of thoughtfulness on any of the other figures. The principal tragedies, those of Buckingham, Queen Katharine and Cardinal Wolsey, conform to the rise-and-fall tradition, satisfying the commoner's appetite for seeing the terrible workings of fate applied to his betters. As they go down, one by one, the fates of these three are marked by a ruthless justice, and their eloquent stoicism in the face of defeat is no more than can be expected of the proud and ambitious. Their words are full of instructive import and their frightening predicaments are to be deplored, even with tears.² But their dooms are natural events, acceptable, if dreadful inevitabilities. Troublesome issues are soon dissipated in the emotions of pity and terror. Invariably the "falls" are spliced with diverting entertainments: a bawdy dialogue, an interval of enchantment in music and dance, a pageant of the high and mighty in full dress -- or a reappearance of the spectacular Henry. Such transitory entertainments, alternating also with the tension of suspenseful plotting, contrive to gratify the expectations of the common theatre-goer. The effect of action is further assisted by the location, near the beginning of the play and near the end, of two parodies of violent action: the masked assault on Wolsey's palace by King Henry in I,iv, and the mob assault at the palace gates in V,iv, both of which use the language of war.

The first two scenes of Act I set forth familiar obstacles to the hero-King with sufficient clarity for theatre-goers accustomed to similar situations in Shakespeare's history plays: disgruntled, ambitious, conniving nobility and clergy; intrusions of a woman into matters of state; rivalries for influence over the monarch himself; subversive machinations of Catholic and French factions, that is to say, "foreign" influences among the "honest English." By 1613, all these elements were well-known among the groundlings to have been among causes of disorder and disaster in times past, and their early appearance in King Henry the Eighth signals to the audience the formula of the dramatic struggle to come, as a familiar story unfolds.

Scene I establishes Wolsey as the villain proper according to custom. Even now -- or so it appears from the discourse on stage -- Englishmen are suffering from the Cardinal's stratagems and blunders in negotiations with France. Wolsey's imperious entrance, the duel of glares between him and the Duke of Buckingham, and the threat that Buckingham "shall lessen this big look" (I,i, 119) seems to bear out accounts of his malice. If there is any doubt about Wolsey's villainy, it is dispelled for good in Scene ii when he arrogates to himself the "royal pronoun" and countermands the King's orders for his own credit with the people:

. . . . let it be noised
That through our intercession this revokement
And pardon comes

(I,ii, 106-108)

It is a maneuver that staging makes obvious to the audience so that the commoners in the pit are flattered into thinking they are too wise

for the Cardinal. Henceforth, his actions may be seen as accumulating evidence of his vice of pride and ambition, progressively intensifying suspense until his predictable downfall.

Likewise, headstrong Buckingham flings himself onto Fortune's treadmill by failing to contain his pride and passion. Norfolk warns him:

Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot
That it do singe yourself: we may outrun,
By violent swiftness, that which we run at,
And lose by over-running
(I,i, 140-143)

But the heedless Duke wants the King's ear for himself, so that he can destroy Wolsey. Buckingham's arrest before the first scene is ended can be considered either a convincing demonstration of the Cardinal's awesome power or a working out of the terms of fatalistic morality -- or both. In any case, the revelation in Scene ii of the Duke's perfidy and his conspiratorial connections with a Chartreux friar and a "confessor" odiously named Car is enough to plant patriotic doubts about his much protested innocence. Even those who miss these damaging allusions to Catholic conspiracy can see Buckingham's case as another telling lesson in the public disaster of treason. The King himself labels Buckingham "A giant traitor!" (II,ii, 199) before calming himself and ordering a trial.

As for Queen Katharine, she is first hinted to be implicated in intrigue by way of her connections with another foreign power said to be bribing Wolsey:

Buck. Now this follows, --
 Which, as I take it, is a kind of puppy
 To the old dam, treason, -- Charles the emperor,
 Under the pretence to see the queen his aunt, --
 For 'twas indeed his colour, but he came
 To whisper Wolsey, -- here makes visitation
 (I,i, 174-179)

To a crowd accustomed to Joan Pucelle and Queen Margaret in the Henry VI trilogy, the details here are less important than the suggestion. The Queen's passion and ambition are developed in Scene ii where she tries to assert her influence over the King in opposition to Wolsey. Seemingly successful at first, she rouses Henry to action in behalf of his grieved subjects. Wolsey turns the event to his own advantage, and the rivalry between Queen and Cardinal grows more openly hostile as the scene progresses. She interrupts the Surveyor's testimony twice -- once, seemingly out of concern for Buckingham, but again, more plainly to undermine the Cardinal's witness. Both times Henry cuts her off, properly enough in the eyes of a crowd for whom termagant queen on stage signified a threat to tranquillity. Finally, as the King seems convinced of Buckingham's treachery, the Cardinal exults:

Now, madam, may his highness live in freedom,
 And this man out of prison?
 (I,ii, 200-201)

The Queen concedes with "God mend all!" Her barrenness of sons is a further flaw in a persona already established as unsympathetic.

Thus, in two scenes the means are provided to impress the veriest dullard with the notion that the Queen and the Cardinal are deadly rivals, that Katharine's interest in the grieving subjects and

in Buckingham's innocence is nothing but a screen for her hatred, and that she has intruded into the King's affairs beyond the point of seemliness. Buckingham is already doomed, and, it seems, rightly so, considering the unsavoriness of his associations. The unfruitful Queen has so pressed her luck that she is sure to be next in the tragic queue. But the real excitement is due to come when the despicable Wolsey finally over-reaches himself. Not one of the three is thoroughly credible; each is a menace to the hero-King who is already identified with the interests of the crowd itself. The highly visible three-ring rivalry circling about the central popular figure serves to increase the suspense by multiplying the promise of action in a play in which action itself must be prudently minimized.

In Scene iii the low comedy dialogue by three lords en route to the Cardinal's banquet restates in parody the play's popular theme: ridding the English of insidious and sterile foreign influences. Lord Sands and the Lord Chamberlain ridicule the "unmanly" French fashions introduced by impressionable Englishmen who attended the King at Calais. The two comics ape acquired struts and facial fits for the delectation of the sturdy honest commoner:

Cham. As far as I see all the good our English
 Have got by the late voyage is but merely
 A fit or two o' the face

Sands. They have all new legs, and lame ones: one would take it,
 That never saw 'em pace before, the spavin
 Or springhalt reign'd among 'em.

(I,iii, 5-13)

The uproar of drums, trumpets and firing guns throws the hall into pandemonium. In Wolsey's words, it is war:

What warlike voice,
And to what end, is this? Nay, ladies, fear not:
By all the laws of war you're privileged.
(I,iv, 50-52)

For all that the audience well knows who has arrived, the Cardinal comically appears baffled and stupid, assuming the visitors are foreigners. The villain is hilariously caught off his guard.

When the masked King Henry suddenly commands the whole stage in his brilliant mock invasion of the Cardinal's precincts, the episode becomes both a parody and an assurance of Wolsey's defeat, an event the crowd can foresee with pleasure while savoring the suspense of his unwitting servility toward the intruders. Subsequently, Henry's earthy heartiness in his "capture" of Anne Bullen reaches for the approval of the coarse-minded who have already been made aware by Lord Sands of her lascivious propensities. Henry takes over where Sands left off a moment before the raid:

By heaven, she is a dainty one. Sweetheart,
I were unmannerly, to take you out,
And not to kiss you. A health, gentlemen!
Let it go round.
(I,iv, 94-97)

The approach is even cruder than Sands', and for that reason is all the more honestly English. Finally, the King's concluding words are a rousing challenge to the contemptible Cardinal, an implied threat conveyed through sexual suggestion. The point is not likely to be missed by the animalistic commoners, despite the ceremonial conviviality:

Good my lord cardinal: I have half a dozen healths
 To drink to these fair ladies, and a measure
 To lead 'em once again; and then let's dream
 Who's best in favour. Let the music knock it.
 (I,iv, 103-107)

Once the crowd-mind is tuned to a certain view of events that is congruent with its taste, other episodes of the drama fall in line to give that view credence. Moreover, the familiar rhythms and imagery of rhetorical poetry, which Eliot perceives as "swallowed," are the matrix for intervals of palpable excitements; the blank verse has a soothing effect, especially on those who are deaf to the complexities of its meaning and are unaware of their own susceptibility to its tranquillizing properties. The Blackfriars Scene (II,iv) is a case in point: the divorce proceedings vaguely gratify idle curiosity about the private affairs of the mighty, and the episode is enlivened at timely intervals by ceremony of state and the passionate rant of Queen Katharine. It ends in a crowd-pleasing aside by Henry:

I may perceive
 These cardinals trifle with me: I abhor
 This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome.
 (II,iv, 235-237)

But while the subtleties of character or situation in this long scene may be of absorbing interest to a knowledgeable few, they are for the most part lost on the ordinary man. Whatever thoughts he may be capable of are lulled by the charms of language in the long passages of rhetorical declamation.

The rousing finale of Act V seems to justify the rightness of the crowd's sensual appetite to which allusion after allusion has catered until the mob assault at the palace gates. The last scene

unmistakeably associates the mob's fecundity with the conclusive triumph of their lusty monarch, although by means of the "language of war" in V, iv, where the Porter and his Man speak of "cannons" and a "mortar-piece," this triumph implies subduing the mob and suppressing rebellion. Victory is celebrated in a dream-like pageant, concluding with an effusive tribute to a unified, fruitful and self-perpetuating nation. In Cranmer's christening speech for the child Elizabeth -- the "maiden phoenix" -- devisiveness and contradictions are dissolved in the poetry of plenty:

. . . good grows with her:
 In her days ever man shall eat in safety,
 Under his own vine, what he plants: and sing
 The merry songs of peace to all his neighbors:
 God shall be truly known

 . . . our children's children
 Shall see this, and bless heaven.

(V,v, 33-56)

So the drama ends -- a masterly blend of poetry, politics and sex that deserves more admiration than it receives from twentieth century practitioners of crowd management.

The King's King

Whatever his failures as a sovereign, King James took the monarchy seriously, and was inclined to expect the same attitude in others. Had he attended a court performance of King Henry the Eighth he would have been able to see it somewhat as his loyal subjects would, but colored by the rather more lofty and enlightened vision of a self-conscious specialist. Thus, the dramatic interest for a hypothetical

Arise, and take place by us: half your suit
 Never name to us; you have half our power:
 The other moiety, ere you ask, is given;
 Repeat your will and take it.

(I,ii, 10-13)

Until the end of the scene, power as symbolized by the pronoun continues to shift uncertainly from person to person, threatening the authority of the King. Such a dramatic refinement is one calculated to keep a paranoid monarch's teeth on edge until his counterpart on stage extricates himself from his predicament. Probably a high point for the royal spectator, even more than for the groundling, is the King's aside at the end of the Blackfriars scene, when the hero is clearly alert to his enemies. If so, the royal understanding would lag somewhat behind that of his subjects because of James's preference for seeing the rowdy masked assault as associated specifically with Henry VIII instead of with the King as hero.

Aside from the stage-king's apparent success, James would have been gratified by his own feeling of superiority toward a Tudor he considered distasteful. The most significant feature of the play from the point of view of an English sovereign is that the stage-king emerges unblemished while any crudities or hypocrisies to be observed in the royal character can be regarded as personal attributes peculiar to the notorious Henry VIII. A number of strategies maintain this duality, so that two kinds of king can be observed simultaneously, one of them personally interesting to a real monarch, the other perhaps contemptibly amusing. Hence, because it is given over almost entirely to the traditional Henry VIII, Scene iv -- that of the masked invasion

at York Place -- need not necessarily be associated with conflicts pertaining to the Stuart King.

The separation of the particular king from the general king is possible partly because no explicit responsibility for the series of individual tragedies attaches itself to the King's person throughout the drama. Although the relevance of Henry VIII's actions to events of his reign exists in historical record and could be deduced from commonplace knowledge of 1613, this connection is overtly touched only once in the play:

Suf. How is the king employ'd?

Cham. I left him private,
Full of sad thoughts and troubles.

Nor. What's the cause?

Cham. It seems the marriage with his brother's wife
Has crept too near his conscience.

Suf. No, his conscience
Has crept too near another lady.
(II,ii, 15-19)

The sly dig is humorous, and specifically applicable to Henry VIII, but its import is immediately redirected:

Nor. 'Tis so:
This is the cardinal's doing, the king-cardinal:
That blind priest, like the eldest son of fortune,
Turns what he list. The king will know him one day.
(II,ii, 19-22)

The King's hand is never really visible. At no point is he blamed for events. The tragic figures maintain appropriate tragic dignity by poetically declaiming their own faults or by decrying each other, but they have only blessings and regrets to express for the King.

Buckingham, the first to fall, blames his fate on his own ambition and vanity, as well as on his "base accusers" and unChristian foes. The law is good and just, his trial is noble. When he equates the King's pleasure with the "will of heaven" (I,i, 209), his sentiments are echoed by Lord Abergavenny who falls with him.

Queen Katharine's fall is handled adroitly. Until she learns of his death, she persistently and passionately blames the Cardinal for her fate, reciting at length the case for her own loyalty and devotion, until finally, with a blessing on the King, she resignedly commends her daughter to his care (IV,ii, 125ff). In the divorce scene, centerpiece of the play, the Cardinal and the Queen carry the burden of verbal strife, while the King is provided with a piece of eloquence that dissipates the main issue:

Go thy ways, Kate:
That man i' the world who shall report he has
A better wife, let him in nought be trusted,
For speaking false in that: thou art, alone,
If thy rare qualities, sweet gentleness,
Thy meekness saint-like, wife-like government,
Obeying in commanding, and thy parts
Sovereign and pious else, could speak thee out,
The queen of earthly queens
(II,iv, 133-141)

The rest of the scene continues the poetry, as the King, "hulling in the wild sea of [his] conscience" (199-200), clears himself and Wolsey of blame.

Wolsey's fall fits the pattern. When he perceives his undoing, his first thought is for his own stupidity:

O negligence!
Fit for a fool to fall by: what cross devil
Made me put this main secret in the packet
(III,ii, 213-215)

Later, in his famous "state of man" speech, he says his "high-blown pride" broke under him (361-362), and further on he observes that it was Lady Anne who pulled him down. He advises Cromwell to "fling away ambition:/ By that sin fell the angels" (440-441). But the King has "cured" him, and he is humbly grateful to his grace: "God bless him!" (392).

If the rhetoric of the fallen is one means by which a Stuart kingly King can be isolated from the Henry VIII that appeals to popular taste, another is the thrifty use of King Harry motifs. In Act III, Scene ii, such a motif is put in the mouths of other characters as a way of maintaining the good King Harry impression without overloading the king-figure's speeches:

Suf.

Cardinal Campeius

Is stol'n away to Rome; hath ta'en no leave;
Has left the cause o' the king unhandled; and
Is posted, as the agent of our cardinal,
To second all his plot. I do assure you
The king cried Ha! at this.

Cham.

Now, God incense him,

And let him cry Ha louder!

(III,ii, 56-63)

Moreover, the summary scenes themselves assist the duality because they deliver much of the historical narrative in the form of gossip synopses which only indirectly implicate the King.

Wolsey's fall should be of further interest in the monarch's eyes because here begins the revelation of techniques for dealing with untrustworthy advisers. In the royal version of rise-and-fall morality, the conniving courtiers, inherently inferior to a king, can be counted upon to arrange their own and each other's doom. But the King

himself, as the embodiment of divine authority is immune, of course, to the workings of fate that are applicable to his subjects. He need only wait until they destroy themselves, whereupon he may act with the customary divine wisdom, reproaching them with regal eloquence tinged with a heavy-handed irony. "'Tis well said," the King admonishes the caught-out Cardinal. "And 'tis a kind of good deed to say well . . ." (III,ii, 152-153). At last there is no longer any doubt about the kingly pronoun: ". . . say withal,/ If you are bound to us or no" (165). There is no one else onstage with whom the plural can be shared. Faced with such supreme self-possession, the traitor can only resignedly blame himself and his only visible enemy (Anne Bullen) and bless the King. The now self-assured sovereign can afford to be generous to Cranmer in Act V, Scene i:

Stand up, good Canterbury:
Thy truth and thy integrity is rooted
In us, thy friend.

(V,i, 113-115)

Further on, the stage-King is even more sympathetic from the point of view of a royal spectator:

Know you not
How your state stands i' the world, with the whole world?
Your enemies are many, and not small; their practices
Must bear the same proportion; and not ever
The justice and the truth o' the question carries
The due o' the verdict with it: at what ease
Might corrupt minds procure knaves as corrupt
To swear against you? such things have been done.

(V,i, 126-133)

Although these words are addressed to Cranmer, they also have a special meaning, as if the King is talking to himself. In that sense, they convey an understanding of the burdens of a king in a way

that could be flattering to a royal sensibility. But they also indicate that the stage-king had been aware all along of the attempts to manipulate him. Provided he could identify with the stage-king, a real monarch could find this awareness comforting -- because it tells him something he would like to believe about himself.

The Stuart concept of sovereignty is rehearsed in full view in the third scene of the last act. There the stage-king suppresses the Privy Council revolt against his trusted Cranmer, and by extension, against his own authority. The means he uses are a combination of fortuitous information, omniscient foresight, melodramatic timing, and benign rhetoric. The underlings fall into grovelling attitudes before the majestic presence that takes them by surprise. The malcontented Gardner is suddenly effusively slavish:

Dread sovereign, how much are we bound to heaven
In daily thanks, that gave us such a prince;
Not only good and wise, but most religious:
One that, in all obedience, makes the church
The chief aim of his honour; and, to strengthen
That holy duty, out of dear respect,
His royal self in judgement comes to hear
(V,iii, 114-120)

The picture of the King at the end of this scene may be colored according to the picture James had of his royal self: here is a peacemaker in a story-book reconciliation of deadly enemies and perfidious courtiers, a benevolent sovereign conjuring by royal command the embracing friendships and healing holidays that solve all the problems of state.

The Blackfriars Kings

Sir Henry Wotton observed that in All Is True the King's company "set forth . . . many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage." The Globe production, he said, was "sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous."³

Wotton's opinion is pertinent here, first of all, because it indirectly indicates the fine line of discretion playwright and theatre had to observe in producing an English king play. In 1613, a successful theatre business depended on amiable relations with the authorities, as well as on pleasing a steadily diversifying clientele. Any bald disparagement of the monarchy or of factional heroes would be noticed and resented. That some such quality of disparagement seemed present in All Is True is apparent from Wotton's remark, although the context indicates he might have meant that the mode of production cheapened character rather than that the play directly attacked particular personages. Cheapening of character, it may be remembered from Hugo's observations, is a characteristic of theatre crowd psychology. But Wotton implies that the mode of production itself contributed to this effect.

Wotton was a member of the knowledgeable elite, a courtier entrusted with the King's business abroad. As already noted, it was Sir Henry who informed the Court of Galileo's disturbing discovery and whose friend, the poet Donne, expressed the Court circle's awareness of the social impact to come from the "new science." Wotton was

of the same social set that sometimes occupied the boxes at the Globe's summer performances and that frequented the exclusive premises of Blackfriars in winter.

If the demeaning of important personages was one of the effects of the play that Wotton considered worth recording, he was spelling out either his own concern or that of his social element. That cheapening of the great had occurred in a production presented as popular fare would be worrisome to an aristocrat inclined to associate familiarity with contempt. There had been incidents aplenty in the theatres of London in which belittling of character and contempt for "greatness" took the form of irresponsible satire and vicious parody. The subtlest disparagements, of course, occurred in the small theatres where the least nuance could affect a knowledgeable audience of "insiders," persons who could afford both familiarity and contempt. But no "insider" who valued himself and his position would have been comfortable to think of commoners exposed to the devastating political criticism he enjoyed. Hence, perhaps, the note of uneasiness in Wotton's remark. He or his informant may have seen more in the play than the groundlings did, observing at the same time certain disconcerting effects on the crowd.

There is no record of King Henry the Eighth having been played at Blackfriars by the King's company. Yet the intimacy of the private theatre would obviously have heightened the ironic significance of many scenes and passages as well as enriched the play's overall import. Besides, we can already see that the dramatic techniques it

incorporates, especially the music, dance and spectacles, are typical of entertainments at Blackfriars. Any of these features as they are indicated in the text is capable of being simplified or amplified as opportunity allows. For instance, there are at least three occasions when a mechanical boat could be used effectively: in Scenes iii and iv of Act I, and in Act II, Scene i. The same machinery could serve again to enhance the Orpheus song in III, i; the Coronation procession in IV, i; Queen Katharine's dream vision in IV, ii; and the christening procession in V, v. Still, each of these features could be managed by conventional exits, promenades, or, in the case of the vision dance, by means of the standard trapdoor. It may be that the play was designed with both theatres in mind. Or perhaps the King's company decided to profit early from the feverish interest in divorce during the summer of 1613 by staging their Henry VIII play at the Globe in advance of the opening of a more refined and finished production scheduled for the winter season at Blackfriars.

More helpful to the argument for Blackfriars production is the provision King Henry the Eighth makes for gratifying factional taste. Elite Jacobean audiences had come to expect topical parallels in drama, in addition to versions of history that flattered their intelligence and excited their emotions. The satisfactions for such spectators would come largely from details of dialogue and situation which, in a play like King Henry the Eighth would be lost in the noise of the throng at the Globe.

At least two main lines of understanding appropriate to the

tastes of the alert audiences of 1613 can be found in the play. They are the Catholic and the pro-Parliamentarian or Protestant views.⁴

It should go without saying that these lines of understanding are described here in a very simplified way. In reality they must have displayed considerable complexity. Moreover, dilute versions of these partisan views probably affected some commoners at the Globe, spectators who, nevertheless, would tend to see the play as patriotic historical drama with a hero-King drawn to their simpler tastes. But whatever interpretations the knowledgeable Anglican or Catholic happened to make, self-interest and a selective memory would help each to see the figure of the stage-king as a monarch conforming to partisan notions of history.

Aside from the uniquely entertaining depiction of the hated Anne Bullen as the "spice of . . . hypocrisy," the most gripping aspect of King Henry the Eighth for the Catholic would be the dramatization of a multiple tragedy of historical record. Preoccupied with his personal situation, the Recusant would focus his attention on the three tragic figures as victims of the "unseen" hand of Henry, author of Catholic distress in England. Buckingham's ruin could be regarded as a bitter example of the heretical tyranny that destroyed many Englishmen. Queen Katharine would be profoundly moving as the epitome of wronged virtue. The Cardinal could be as creditable to the Recusant as King Henry would be to the mob. And Cranmer would seem a despicable puppet of the King. But Henry himself, boorish and ruthless, deceptively unctuous, could be viewed as evil temporarily

triumphant, destined to be deposed sooner or later, in spirit if not in the flesh. The rise-and-fall motif as precipitated in the course of the play would be reinforced by the political sentiment already in the mind of the Catholic spectator so that he might regard the dialogue among the gentlemen onlookers in the coronation scene as an ironic statement of theme:

Sec. Gent. I take it, she that carries up the train
Is that old noble lady, Duchess of Norfolk.

First Gent. It is; and all the rest are countesses.

Sec. Gent. Their coronets say so. These are stars indeed;
And sometimes falling ones.

First Gent. No more of that.
(IV,i, 52-55)

Further on, the gentlemen comment on the passing court favorites, the new men on the rise, Stokesly, Gardiner, Cranmer and Cromwell, speculating on their chances of remaining in power. Wolsey's fall is so recent that one onlooker is still referring to Whitehall as York Place. Aside from its many other functions, this summary dialogue serves to inform those who are prepared to hear such a message that they are watching a historical drama describing the instability of power and the perpetual struggle to achieve it.

Meanwhile, certain of the Anglican gentry might be inclined to regard King Henry in a mythical, patriotic light because the events portrayed on stage had contributed to their interests. To the Protestant, the fall of the domineering Wolsey would seem well-deserved, and his passionate utterances against pride and ambition

would sound like tragic truth. Likewise, Queen Katharine's fall could be thought of as fortuitous, though profoundly pitiful. And King Henry himself would seem to personify the robustness and energy the Protestant felt was the Englishman's legacy from the Tudor reformation. On the other hand, some Parliamentary partisans might well have assorted feelings about Henry; he was an absolute monarch, a figure distasteful on principle.

Beyond these differences, factional spectators could have shared portions of a double image of the stage King whenever a Blackfriars production made use of dramatic opportunities provided in the script. For many of the court coterie and men of affairs, whatever their secret or open commitments, the second stage-King emerging intermittently would most likely be a caricature of King James as suggestively mimicked from time to time by the actor. This James would likely appear at the same intervals that a royal spectator would find a picture of himself, particularly in Act V. But at Blackfriars, when circumstances allowed, still other opportunities would be exploited, as we shall see in a moment.

The incongruity of an ephemeral stage-James with the swaggering virile Tudor would vibrate with exquisite irony for the partisan of any faction. Their lordships were likeminded at least in their disillusionment with King James, even though they might have had different reasons for cynicism. Yet the preoccupation of each sort of partisan with his own view of King Henry would variously check the effectiveness of any suggestive aping. This kind of complexity, controlled by the

spectator's own habits of thought, would allow a teasing suggestion of topical parallels to emerge from the play without the risk of imprudent one-for-one analogy.

The King's conscience, a matter in which Henry's reputed hypocrisy and James's well-known sanctimony coincide, begs for mimic treatment for Blackfriars audiences. "Conscience" is the dominant motif of Act II, Scene ii, although it is repeatedly played upon thereafter. The Lord Chamberlain and the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk begin by discussing the King's conscience. Later, the King himself is disclosed in "private meditations." He welcomes Wolsey as "The quiet of my wounded conscience" (II,ii, 75). The scene ends with the King in an apparently tearing dilemma:

But, conscience, conscience!
O, 'tis a tender place
(II,ii, 143-144)

The moment when this scene could be charged with political ambiguity occurs with the King's seemingly rhetorical question: "Who am I? ha?" (68), at which Norfolk launches into a babble of obeisance:

A gracious king that pardons all offences
Malice ne'er meant: our breach of duty this way
Is business of estate: in which we come
To know your royal pleasure.
(II,ii, 68-71)

Should a touch of doubt creep into the King's question it would be enough to throw a light from another realm onto the rest of the scene, reducing the King's dignity to farce.

Whereas King James himself would tend to see the stage-King's triumphs in Act V as justification of his own views, Englishmen close

to the Court might enjoy the secret feeling that these episodes parody Jamesian policy. The King's speech to Cranmer, which should have pleased James, might have gratified his aristocratic subjects in quite a different way. These words are especially loaded with irony for persons who had felt betrayed by one or another of James' vacillations:

. . . and not ever
The justice and the truth o' the question carries
The due o' the verdict with it
(V,i, 129-131)

Much of the dialogue allowed the King in the Privy Council scene seems deliberately feeble compared to the impression broad staging would give it. In lines like these, a clever actor could take advantage of flaccid words to project a subtle sense of flaccid rule: "No, sir, it does not please me" (V,ii, 134), or "Be friends, for shame, my lords!" (160). The situation could be made additionally ludicrous by transmuting the speeches of some courtiers into puppet language.

Finally, the last scene contains comic collisions of Tudor virility with Stuart futility. Cranmer's high-flown panegyric at the christening concludes with an evocation of a James at the height of flourishing vigor:

. . . peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,
That were the servants to this chosen infant,
Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him:
Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,
His honour and the greatness of his name
Shall be, and make new nations: he shall flourish,
And, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches
To all the plains about him: our children's children
Shall see this, and bless heaven.
(V,v, 48-56)

The King, in his Henry VIII aspect, brings the occasion down to earth: "Thou speakest wonders" (57). Should the line have been delivered with the least touch of sarcasm most of the Blackfriars audience would have been laughing. Cranmer resumes his rhetorical flight with a tribute to Elizabeth. The King, now with a touch of James, replies: "O lord Archbishop,/ Thou has made me now a man!" Because contempt for James was general, and this contempt, as already mentioned, was inspired in part by James's notorious effeminacies, the refined, even effete, entertainment of seeing the monarch's absurdities parodied on stage would be a suitable treat for the gentry, regardless of their partisan commitments. King Henry the Eighth provides amply for such ridicule.

Although King Henry's hand in disastrous events would not be easy for some spectators to detect in the action of the play, in the close quarters of a small theatre invisible power could become palpable to persons with lively or educated memories. King Henry makes only one explicit move in his climb to absolute sovereignty; he captures Anne Bullen in the Cardinal's camp. Events evolve from this move that work to his advantage, but he simply allows them to happen. Therefore, the King's blamelessness can also be seen as pretense, with pious rhetoric the disguise for reality. Any "insider" would be flattered to believe he could see through the mask. Because the language and action one spectator accepts as traditional truth will be regarded by another as equivocation and pretense, a divided audience demands this kind of ambiguous treatment of the "great" that we find

in King Henry the Eighth. Here is a principle of ambiguity that works for the split into religious factions as well as for the division developing between commoners and gentry. Among the Blackfriars audience, though, the predisposition of each spectator would determine when he would notice equivocation on the part of the King, which of the two king personalities he would associate with this knowledge, and whether he would interpret the deviousness as wicked or feeble.

So also Buckingham's innocence could seem somewhat credible to the Parliamentary partisan should a hint of James intrude anywhere into Act I, Scene ii, so that the Duke's tragedy might remind him of Overbury, even then in the Tower at the instance of a fickle King. But because of the Protestant propensity for idealizing Henry, any discernible parallel would soon be dispersed with the onset of dramatic distractions. At the same time the Catholic would be so unlikely to associate Buckingham with Overbury that he could immerse himself in the predicament of a literal historic Buckingham. Cranmer's situation, on the other hand, is likely to have engaged the sympathies of the Protestant who would tend to see the Archbishop in the dress of historical sanctity. For the supporters of Parliament, Cranmer might seem to stand for the kind of well-meaning councillor who, like Overbury, was undermined by the devious Papists -- quite a different view from the Recusant's pattern of thought.

The shuffling of emotions and associations permitted by the structure and language of the play approaches rare virtuosity in the

way the issue of divorce is confronted and managed. Just the selection of the Henry VIII motif for presentation at this moment is inspired irony because it gratifies the public appetite for the topic of divorce in general without being perfectly analogous to the contemporary scandal at any point. Virtually the only similarity between the historic and contemporary episodes is that the "cause" is a kind of unfruitfulness -- in the former a specialized barrenness, and in the other, induced impotence. But King Henry the Eighth turns inside out the moral positions of the Catholic and Protestant factions in the Essex-Howard controversy. The scandal's seeming parallels with the Tudor divorce are inevitably frayed away by the contradictions in the spectators' own minds.

CHAPTER IV

STATECRAFT OR STAGECRAFT?

That one play can be shown to accommodate so many points of view, albeit they are mere models of contemporary audiences, speaks of the richness of the imagination behind the work. The multiplicity of interpretations that can be singled out implies the hand of a playwright who was as knowledgeable about the range of sensibilities of his times as he was versatile in combining the elements he needed. Furthermore, the play was popular for a century or more before it provoked the critics' uneasiness. It may be that certain elements essential for the play's success in 1613 and thereafter are no longer taken into account because they no longer seem relevant to modern life.

The shifting bi-focal view of the king-figure is particularly difficult to adjust for modern vision until we notice that certain speeches are set speeches, and that the flatness of their style allows different interpretations according to the emotional predisposition of a public which was no longer unified. Also the static intervals in the King's characterization, the parodies of action instead of action itself, and the sparseness of Henry VIII trade-marks can be regarded as further accommodations for the tastes of a diversifying range of spectators. All these features of the play allow a second king-figure to emerge, one that is in accord with the

understanding of certain audiences. In special circumstances, that understanding would be enlivened by the actor's skill. And if we are to associate the play with 1613, King James is the most likely model for the second stage-king.

Apparently King Henry the Eighth was not printed until 1623 when it was published in the chronological context of Shakespeare's history plays. Only the next year the Crown explicitly proscribed stage representation of living Christian kings as a result of Middleton's scandalous A Game of Chess, which, in some respects, King Henry the Eighth resembles.

It is understandable that some of the appeal of King Henry the Eighth would be lost on certain kinds of audiences once the original ironic combination of kings became irrelevant. When the knowledge of James's personal idiosyncracies was lost upon his death, some of the point of providing for mimicry was lost as well, and the entertainment value of the play declined. It became a shade less coherent, although it still remained entertaining in a more general way, as a national historic episode, an appropriate entertainment at Court, or an exercise in patriotism for schoolboys.¹ For the general public Wolsey could be represented by a comedian like Cibber whose overacting, according to Davies, "made the character ridiculous."² But Davies was to observe as late as 1784 that "without particular attention, Harry will be manufactured into a royal bully or a ridiculous buffoon."³ Occasionally, as the political climate allowed, mimic kings and councillors might have emerged briefly, parodying the

characteristics of the current occupant of the throne and those of his advisers. The aped image of almost any British monarch could be effectively thrown into juxtaposition with the swaggering Tudor. But the combination could never again have the satirical precision that it would have had during the reign of James, flower of the union of York and Lancaster.

With the decline of monarchical power, King Henry the Eighth gradually lost most of its relevance as a king play,⁴ and became a vehicle for opulent staging and costuming.⁵ Eventually, a sentimental taste discovered the rhetorical "fall speeches" of the victims of tragedy, and attention was diverted from the king-figure almost entirely to the probing of "character" through the stage business of actors and actresses.⁶ Oddly, although the dialogue can allow her a fairly strident personality, Queen Katharine came to be considered majestically affecting once actresses began to assume the roles of women.⁷

Theatre-goers unaccustomed to monarchical power as a fact of life are inclined to understand only plainly-drawn kings that are easy to identify. The king-figure in King Henry the Eighth is not drawn so accommodatingly for the naïve modern. Instead, it is compounded of the varieties of kingliness which Englishmen of 1613 accepted as real. If one of those varieties was concocted of ephemeral allusions to a living James, the representation would have been nevertheless satisfying for those spectators who could see it.

But what are we now to make of this spectacle of patriotism

which reflects an intrigue of satire as well as comforting lessons? How do we explain a king play that catches the monarch in a moment of triumph, which also happens to mirror a fleeting grotesque of his living successor? If we consult the audience we get different answers, yet "all are right" -- or think they are. In that respect, the play seems to demonstrate how insubstantial are the products of the human mind.

The unique arrangements of poetry, illusion and wit in King Henry the Eighth also suggest that the craft of the successful ruler is similar to that of the successful dramatist. Rhetoric is soothing and suggestive; pageantry and parodies of action are as expedient as fighting and bloodshed; a struggle for power can be accomplished by barely perceptible moves. Accordingly, the play seems to say, there is an illusory theatricality about power: a figure called King reigns over a "fry of fornication" called citizens or subjects, and he justifies his rule by gratifying their pride and their taste for action, pageantry and jokes. In that case, the task of the dramatist may be to create the illusion that Fortune's wheel can be made to stop when the King is at the top. When he succeeds, the playwright becomes the unseen hand controlling the crowd, gentry, and perhaps even the King himself with theatrical strategies that entertain each spectator with his "chosen" truth, creating a multiplicity of truths "woven/ So strangely in one piece" (IV,i, 80-81).

King Henry the Eighth conveys a sense of the inevitability of power, however mysterious its source and regardless of the struggles of passion veiled or half-veiled by illusion. But even as power prevails in human affairs, it is also inevitably characterized by the fall of those who wield it, be they councillors, kings or dynasties. Kings can be as dazzled by success as their subjects are by spectacle. They also may become entranced by the illusion they create to persuade their subjects that they are sovereign. Like James, the hypothetical spectator at this king play, a ruler might not notice that his reflection is mocking him.

The phoenix, appearing as it does at the festive conclusion of this king play, is a fitting emblem for its meaning. The fabulous bird still symbolizes the eternal regeneration of power according to tradition, but at the same time it expresses what John Donne recognized as the irrepressible will to power in all men, an impulse that never allows the illusion of success to linger long enough to be called a permanent reality.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

¹The Complete Works of Shakespeare, 1271. Craig, the editor, cites Wotton's letter dated July 2, 1613. Hereafter the play in question is always referred to as King Henry the Eighth, and all quotations from Shakespeare's plays will be taken from Craig's edition.

²Bentley, Shakespeare: A Biographical Handbook, 79-80.

³Johnson, Johnson on Shakespeare, VIII, 657.

⁴Alexander, "Conjectural History," 86.

⁵See Clark's chapter, "'Henry VIII' on the Stage after Shakespeare's Time" in his A Study of Shakespeare's Henry VIII, 199-214. Some account of the seventeenth century interpretations of the play, particularly the treatment by various actors of the main characters, is in Davies, Dramatic Micellanies, I, Chapter XVII-XX. Other works to consult for more detail are Odell, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving; Sprague, Shakespeare and the Actors; and Winter, Shakespeare on the Stage.

⁶Nicholson, "The Authorship of Henry the Eighth," 490.

⁷Alexander, "Conjectural History," 111.

⁸Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, 5 and 239.

Chapter I

¹Tillyard, "Why Did Shakespeare Write 'Henry VIII'?", 23.

²Boswell-Stone, Shakespeare's Holinshed, 443.

³Ibid., 443.

⁴Harbage, Annals of English Drama, 94.

⁵Ibid., 96.

⁶Ibid., 97.

⁷Ibid., 78.

⁸Cited by Wilson, editor, in Rowley, When you see me, You know me, ix.

⁹Ibid., x. Wilson has composed the facsimile text from Bodleian and Barton copies of the 1605 quarto. All textual citations are from this facsimile.

¹⁰Harbage, Annals of English Drama, 90.

¹¹Rowley, When you see me, You know me, unpagged.

¹²Bentley, Shakespeare: A Biographical Handbook, 79-80.

¹³Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, II, 7; Wallace, The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1. Chambers disputes Wallace's assertion that the Blackfriars boys' company was established in 1597. According to Chambers, the history of Paul's boys dates from twelfth century records of a grammar school connected with the Cathedral where plays were presented by the scholars as early as 1378. In the 1570s they were part of a composite boy company playing occasionally at Blackfriars and with whom John Lyly and Henry Evans were associated (9-13). Chambers' challenge of Wallace's evidence is found in II, 20, and 47-49.

¹⁴Wallace, The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 122 and 166.

¹⁵Harbage, Annals of English Drama, 52.

¹⁶The Complete Works of Shakespeare, 1273.

¹⁷Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, I, 187.

¹⁸Ibid., I, 5.

¹⁹Ibid., II, 6. "The supremacy of the King's men during 1603-16 was undisputed. Of two hundred and ninety-nine plays rewarded at Court for that period, they gave one hundred and seventy-seven, the Prince's men forty-seven . . .," II, 8.

²⁰Welsford, The Court Masque, 191-195. Willson suggests that the "vulgar and senseless waste" of the celebration may have been in part a reaction to the profound grief of King and subjects to the death of Prince Henry the previous autumn. King James VI and I, 285-286.

²¹Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, II, 509-510. He notes that the beginning of the King's company's occupancy of Blackfriars coincides with the grant of a new charter Sept. 20, 1608, under which the Blackfriars and Whitefriars enclaves came under City jurisdiction. The charter provided "certain exemptions as regards assessments and the tenure of offices, but with none as regards responsibility for petty offences and the keeping of the peace." (II, 480) He believes that for some time previous Paul's boys "had been bought off by the payment of 'dead rent' or blackmail to the Master," so relieving competition in the theatre business. II, 7.

²²Bentley, Shakespeare and His Theatre, 109. Bentley makes a plausible reconstruction of events relating to the Blackfriars venture in his Chapter IV, "Shakespeare and the Blackfriars Theatre," 65-99. His suggestions as to the reasons why the company acquired the services of Jonson and the Beaumont and Fletcher team are interesting in that they also help account for the comparative obscurity of Shakespeare at this time. Bentley speculates about a Shakespeare-Fletcher collaboration during the Blackfriars period, but he offers no new certain evidence of it.

²³Harbage lists these three plays along with King Henry the Eighth as being in both the popular and select repertories of the King's Men. That is, they were intended to be played at either the Globe or Blackfriars or both. Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions, 350.

A demonstration of the changing use of the mask from A Midsummer-Night's Dream (1596-97) to The Tempest (1611-12) is in Welsford, The Court Masque, 324-349.

²⁴Bentley, Shakespeare and His Theatre, 79.

²⁵Isaacs, Production and Stage-Management at the Blackfriars Theatre, 5-6.

²⁶Bentley, Shakespeare and His Theatre, 111.

²⁷Bennett, "Shakespeare's Audience," 5-6. From this "hydra-headed" multitude, as Bennett calls it, he excepts only an "austere" segment of "sober middle-class opinion," especially preachers, the element from which an intensifying civic hostility to the theatre made itself heard (4,7). It was to this exceptional element that certain hack-writers were already catering by way of the cheap pamphlet; bourgeois versions of the romance, rise-and-fall morality yarns with a Biblical slant, and attacks on plays and players were among the quantities of "literature" pouring forth from the presses in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, under the signatures of such prolific mediocrities as Anthony Mundy. This development is explored by Turner, Anthony Mundy, An Elizabethan Man of Letters.

²⁸Willson, King James VI and I, 244.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 209.

³⁰Wallace, The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 153-154. His discussion implies that the objective of the City was to absorb the Crown's Blackfriars enclave within London.

³¹Willson, King James VI and I, 223.

³²*Ibid.*, 339-356. Willson gives a detailed account of the scandal, including the 1616 trial of the Somersets for their implication in the death of Sir Thomas Overbury by poison ten days before the 1613 divorce decision. Thomas Campion's The Squire's Masque, presented at Whitehall in December, 1613, to celebrate the marriage of Somerset to Lady Frances, is described in Welsford, The Court Masque, 196-197.

³³Willson, King James VI and I, 341.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 341.

³⁵Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, 111.

³⁶Harbage, Annals of English Drama, 52.

³⁷The vagaries of Fortune afflicted the publication of the work itself. An account is in Campbell, Tudor Conceptions of History and Tragedy, 9-12.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 18.

³⁹Ibid., 11. Variations on the same theme were also appearing in guises especially appropriate to the tastes of the bourgeois, e.g. Anthony Mundy's Mirroure of Mutabilitie (1579), written in the popular tradition of Myrroure for Magistrates. Mundy's "strongly theological method of explaining the falls of princes appealed to the God-fearing middle class who distrusted heathen talk of the goddess who 'turneth as a ball.'" Turner, Anthony Mundy, An Elizabethan Man of Letters, 28. The next year Mundy went a step further, reshaping his theme in A view of Sundry Examples which exploited contemporary sordid scandals as instances of the rise-and-fall morality; Turner sees this pamphlet as a forerunner of domestic tragedy.

⁴⁰Eliot, Elizabethan Dramatists, 47.

⁴¹Harbage, Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions, 84.

⁴²Tillyard, "Why Did Shakespeare Write 'Henry VIII'?", 23. Quoted from Hall's Chronicle.

⁴³Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, 42; and "Why Did Shakespeare Write 'Henry VIII'?", 23.

⁴⁴Willson, King James VI and I, 250.

⁴⁵Isaacs, The Background of Modern Poetry, 77-78.

⁴⁶As quoted in Ibid., 79.

Chapter II

¹Bennett, "Shakespeare's Audience," 6.

²Ibid., 6.

³As quoted in Isaacs, The Background of Modern Poetry, 67.

⁴Ibid., 67.

⁵Translated from Hugo, "Préface," Ruy Blas, 16.

⁶Ibid., 16-17.

⁷Cibber, An Apology for the life of Mr. Colley Cibber, II, 16. An actor and playwright from about 1690 to 1735, Cibber was a sharer and manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, London, for many years. His comments on the theatre business, while they coincide with the observations of others, tend to be less lucid than Hugo's and are often highly colored by a shrewd sense of rhetoric and the euphemistic memory of an old horse out at pasture.

⁸As quoted in Bennett, "Shakespeare's Audience," 6. Harbage indicates this play may date as early as 1613; Annals of English Drama, 102.

⁹The Prologue to Marlowe's Tamburlaine (1587) shows small concern for the varied emotions of the audience:

From jiggling veins of rhyming mother-wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
Threatening the world with high astounding terms,
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.
View but his picture in this tragic glass,
And then applaud his fortunes as you please.

Marlowe, Plays and Poems, 1.

¹⁰Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, I, 7 and 325-326. Welsford cites evidence that James was occasionally bored and impatient at Court entertainments. The Court Masque, 207.

¹¹*Ibid.*, I, 327. The existence of the standing order came to light in 1624 when it was quoted in connection with the scandal over Thomas Middleton's A Game at Chess.

¹²Cibber, An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, II, 215-217.

¹³*Ibid.*, II, 217.

¹⁴The Mirror for Magistrates, 63.

¹⁵Sackville and Norton, Gorboduc, editor's note.

¹⁶Bennett, "Shakespeare's Audience," 6-7.

Chapter III

¹Stage directions for the coronation procession in Act IV, Scene i, omit reference to the King. Rhodes speculates that the King appeared in the procession at the 1613 Globe performance as in the 1727 Drury Lane production (Letter in Times Literary Supplement, Jan. 1, 1931, 12). But the specifically separate entrance of Henry in Act V, Scene v, the consistent staginess of most of his other entries in the play, and the delicacy of the matter of royal divorce and remarriage suggest that inclusion of the King in the Coronation would have been inappropriate, imprudent and untimely.

²Nashe, Pierce Penilesse, 87. "How would it haue ioyed the braue Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and haue his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at seuerall times), who in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding."

Talbot, of course, was a sympathetic hero with whom the Elizabethan English identified. Nevertheless, it is not impossible that the crowd could weep at the fate of a Queen Katharine or a Wolsey, presented as they are in King Henry the Eighth. In any case tears dissolve the faculty of reason.

³As quoted by Craig, editor, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, 1271.

⁴We need not consider the Puritans as significant here because their entertainment requirements were met; as noted in Chapter I, by pamphleteers and preachers.

Chapter IV

¹"... a company of little boys were by their school-master not many years since appointed to act the play of 'King Henry the Eighth,' and one who had no presence, but (an absence rather) as of a whining voice, puling spirit, consumptionish body, was appointed to personate King Henry himself; only because he had the richest clothes, and his parents the best people of the parish: but, when he had spoken his speech rather like a mouse than a man, one of his fellow actors told him, 'If you speak not Hoh with a better spirit your Parliament will not grant you a penny of money.'" Fuller, The History of the Worthies of England (1662), II, 127.

Although schoolboy productions of the play might approximate an aspect of the king-figure that would have entertained Blackfriars audiences there would have been few persons in the audience of Fuller's boys who would have enjoyed the play from that point of view.

²Davies, Dramatic Micellanies, I, 397.

³Ibid., I, 355-356.

⁴The rise-and-fall concept of history fell into neglect with the emergence of parliamentary power, constitutional monarchy and finally party politics and liberal democracy. The Medieval view of aggrandizement of secular power as a disturbance of natural law was incompatible with these developments at least because it induces scepticism toward the rhetoric of expansive mercantilism, progressive industrialism and reform and revolutionary politics. The growth of the printing industry and the spread of literacy served to erode this traditional view of man's affairs by diluting and diffusing its precepts into a domestically moral literature for the Protestant middle class. Again, see Turner, Anthony Mundy, An Elizabethan Man of Letters.

⁵Odell, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving, II. See particularly the account of Charles Kean's production of the play in 1855 (II, 289-91 and 332-338) in which the scenes of pageantry were elaborated and extended with panoramas of Tudor London. Kean took advantage of opportunities the play provides (there are at least three) to use boat machinery. Henry Irving's 1892 production, from which the conspiracy against Cranmer was excised, was so lavish as to be unprofitable in spite of its success for 172 performances. (II, 403-404 and 444-446)

⁶Sprague, in Shakespeare and the Actor, describes some of the treatments given to a number of episodes by such performers as Henry Irving, Russell Bassett and Mrs. Siddons in the nineteenth century.

⁷Mrs. Mary Porter is said to have played Queen Katharine (in 1721) with a tremulous voice, and she was admired for her "grace of sympathetic expression" when she "pathetically suppressed her tears" in II, iv. Winter, Shakespeare on the Stage, 550-552. Mrs. Charles Kean made her Queen Katharine (1855) expire onstage.

Mrs. Siddons is credited with establishing certain traditions of stage business in the Kemble production of 1788-89 which focus much of the interest on Queen Katharine. Mrs. Mary Warner in Phelps' 1844 production "was accounted majestic and tender, -- a noble image of royal womanhood, gracious in her eminence and patient in her distress." (554) Also in the 1840s, the American actress, Charlotte Cushman, in the Kimbolton scene "made at once beautiful and pathetic a bitter struggle of virtue and innocence" (557)

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